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EN, WOMEN, AND PROGRESS.

BY THE LATE

EMMA HOSKEN WOODWARD,

AUTHOR OF 'MARRIED FOR MONEY,' 'BITTER TO SWEET END.'
ETC., ETC.

Fiat Justitia, ruat cœlum.

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TO HER TWO DAUGHTERS,

AGNES EMILY AND GWENDOLINE MARY,

This Work is Dedicated by the Editor,

WITH THE SINCERE HOPE

THAT IT MAY PROVE AN INCENTIVE TO THEM

TO FOLLOW THEIR MOTHER'S EXAMPLE,

AND EVER BE READY

TO AID THE WEAK AND HELPLESS.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

The following work was the result of the diligent labour and earnest study of the closing years in the life of a brilliant and very active mind; and regret will be general that the writer was called hence before it appeared, and that those finishing touches so necessary to the completion of any book were destined never to be given. As it is, it was felt that to do more than correct those small errors that creep into every manuscript, however carefully revised, would be trifling with a sacred trust.

The book deals with the 'Woman Question,' which, under some one of its aspects, enters into every detail of social life.

Its object is earnestly to advocate certain much-needed reforms, and at the same time to give, as far as possible, every argument both for and against the various points treated of.

This the author considered could best be done in the form, already familiarised to us by many well-known works, of a series of conversations or discussions; whilst unity was sought to be imparted to the whole by the undercurrent of a story, which runs through the volume.

Since it was finished in June last, some few changes,

as readers will see for themselves, have taken place; these, however, do not affect the main points in the book.

It will also, doubtless, be noticed that some of the arguments, and a few of the illustrative anecdotes, are repeated, when emphasis required or the argument justified it.

The little party depicted at Crag's Nest is, of course, intended to be composed of typical individuals, and, consequently, the personal views of the author will not be found in any isolated member of the group.

B. B. W.

February 7th, 1885.

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CHAPTER I.

'It yet remains,
Women, for you to cast aside the chains
Of false traditions, marring womanhood;
Men! be it yours to help them on to good!
The race is in its manhood, leave behind
The jealousies of childhood; strive to find
Each an ideal truer and more grand;
Fear not that women, gaining their demand,
Will cast their dower—gentleness—away,
Or love the less because they understand,
But rise and say, "Henceforth we woo perfection hand in hand."

Ode on the Opening of the New Hall in Alexandria College, Dublin, 1879.

'Man was the problem of the eighteenth century, woman is the problem of the nineteenth. No. I shall never cease to say it, the problem is laid down and it must be solved; she who bears half the burden ought to have half the right. Half of the human race is deprived of equality, it must be given to them.'

Victor Hugo.

'Laugh as we may, put it aside as a jest if we will, keep it out of congress or political campaigns, still the woman question is rising in our horizon, larger than the size of a man's hand, and some solution ere long that question must find.'

President Garfield's *Address at Washington Business College.*

'I feel confident that a general discussion of the subject of women's rights will result in a more general recognition and cheerful performance of her appropriate duties.'

Horace Greeley, *Letter to Rev. S. J. May*, 1856.

CHAPTER I.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND MEN'S WRONGS.

'I CONSIDER it most unbrotherly, not to say mean, Harry, the first time you come to see me in my new home to talk of hurrying away at the end of a week; I expected you would spend a month with us at least;' and the young mistress of a pretty country-house, under whose veranda brother and sister stood talking, tried hard, though with indifferent success, to bring an expression of solemnity and vexation into a face naturally bright and piquant rather than severe.

'You must not be vexed, Nellie, dear, or think I do not appreciate your home or your husband, or your sweet little self; Crag's Nest is charming, and Fred is the best of good fellows; but you see business must be attended to; I ought to get to London to-morrow.'

'Oh, Harry, Harry, you must be at the extremest limit of your wits to invent such transparent subterfuges! I thought yesterday it was Tregarthen that required your immediate presence, and as you cannot very well be in Cornwall and London at the same time, I can only suppose that for some reason you wish to get away, though you will not acknowledge it, and are therefore driven to invent lame excuses. But I am not going to listen to them,' continued the speaker, taking her brother's arm with a loving gesture as they strolled from the veranda to the wide terrace below. 'I know Major and Mrs. Knagge are not like the good little books which "combine instruction with amusement"; indeed, without being uncharitable, I must acknowledge that the last quality is remarkable

only by its absence from their conversation; but no one can say the same of Professor Wray; I flattered myself that you were getting to like him as much as I do. Fred will not hear of letting you go; and besides, I so much want you to meet that dear Madeline Acton, she is coming this afternoon.'

Sir Henry Tregarthen gave a little impatient switch of his cane, which sent the gravel flying over the lawn amongst the flower-beds. But as he did not reply, Mrs. Silverton, after a minute's pause, went on with increased enthusiasm.

'There is nothing—no, nothing—in the world I am so proud of as her friendship, which began in our first year at Girton. Before we left college she lost both her parents within a few months; and she was so dreadfully cut up about it that she has not since been near their fine old place in Sussex, which has come to her, as she is an only child, and where I stayed with them once. She now lives principally in London, and devotes most of the time that other girls would spend in amusing themselves, to working for the advancement and happiness of women who are less fortunate in this world's goods and less gifted than she is herself.'

'A new and revised edition of Mrs. Jellaby in fact,' said Sir Henry, *sotto voce*, but not low enough to escape his sister's ear.

'Nothing of the sort,' she replied, in indignant denial. 'Madeline is the last to neglect her own people; at this moment she has made a home for an aunt, the widow of an officer, and her little girl; and more than this, she is like a daughter to the one and the best of elder sisters to the other, whom she is sending to Queen's College School, and whom she means to train for and start in some profession. She has very decided views, as I think I have told you, upon the necessity which exists that every woman, whatever her station in life, should be trained, so that, if needful, she may be able to support herself.'

'Oh, I do not for a moment doubt that your friend has very decided views upon this and every other subject, and to

tell the truth, my dear, it is from this very lady with "views" that I am anxious to escape. I really could not, even to please you, face one of the strong-minded confraternity, who spend their time in getting up petitions, stump the country clamouring for women's rights, and —— oh, I know quite enough of such ladies not to wish to improve the acquaintance.'

'I should not have thought that my dear old good-natured brother was capable of such an excess of venom as you put into the word "strong-minded." Now I should have thought that strength of mind was a quality very valuable either to man or woman, for it generally implies a corresponding strength of all the other faculties—good brains, noble ideas, and—yes, and warm feelings too. Oh! you need not look so incredulous! my friend is a proof in herself that it is quite possible to be strong without ceasing to be tender, though she *has* sufficient strength of will to save life from degenerating into a mere emotional see-saw.'

'Well, my idea of a strong-minded woman is a sort of being who looks upon men as her natural enemies, or at best regards us all like Mrs. Winthrop as a species of animal whom it has pleased Heaven to make instinctively overbearing and troublesome, like bulls and turkey-cocks.'

'I have no doubt you have drawn an admirable mental portrait of poor Madeline; I am sure she would feel flattered, only you ought to complete it by giving her a hooked nose, a moustache, blue spectacles, gloves with holes, and a generally unkempt appearance. I believe you think there is some inseparable connexion between usefulness and bad taste.'

'Not exactly; nor have I any sympathy with the old writer, who, after declaring that when any woman was notorious for her mind, she was in general frightfully ugly, proceeds to warn men against such, since he says, in language more forcible than polite, "fecundity of brain in the weaker sex usually accompanies sterility and a disordered system." I have, as you know, the greatest possible respect for women, but not for abnormal types such as the lady lecturer I heard of the other

day, who, not content with claiming equality, asserted the superiority of her sex on all points, and ended by declaring that Solomon owed all his wisdom to the number of his wives. She did not name her authority.'

'Nor do you *yours*,' replied his companion, laughing, 'I suspect in this case he drew upon imagination for his facts. But this is what vexes me, that you, not being one of those small-minded men who have naturally a low opinion of women's intellectual capacity, and of her place in the world, should yet indulge in such prejudices.'

'Speaking of some men's estimate of women's place and value in the world,' replied Sir Henry, with a skilful evasion of the *argumentum ad hominem*, 'I was very much amused on my way home two months ago, when taking up on board the steamer a stray copy of the *Gold Coast Times*, to see that the Chief Justice sitting on the bench at Cape Coast Castle, while summing up in a case of murder, and speaking of the inadequacy of the motives often prompting this crime, said, "Murders are often committed in England for the sake of a bottle of rum, or a pot of beer, or sometimes *even* for the sake of a woman."'

'If it was not a slip of the tongue, and he was really in earnest, I cannot say much for the judges own claim to respect,' replied Mrs. Silverton; 'I quite believe that

> "So viel wie Jemand von den Frauen hält
> So viel hält er von der Ehr, oder
> So wenig."

In other words, "It is the low man thinks the woman low," and therefore I can't bear to hear you, who are so very different, repeating ignorant platitudes of a movement about which you know nothing except by hearsay, and taking a prejudice against a girl you have never seen, and to whom you will give no chance of defending herself.'

'She could scarcely desire a more devoted champion, at any rate, than her friend and my little sister, Miss Nellie Tre ——

I beg her pardon—Mrs. Silverton, of Crag's Nest, Ilfracombe, deputy county magistrate, and leader of public opinion in that formerly benighted region; besides, from what I have seen of Major and Mrs. Knagge, your friend will have in the latter also a valuable ally.

'On the contrary, Mrs. Knagge proclaims herself thoroughly satisfied with the existing position of women, and disclaims any desire for a change.'

'She keeps the Major well in hand, at any rate, so I understand, though, I must say, she has the good taste not to make it very obvious here. I have heard from some fellows who used to be in his regiment, that the way in which she was always interfering in matters connected with the service was perfectly sickening.'

'Just so,' said Mrs. Silverton. 'When you know a little more of them you will find that it is not the women whom you now regard with such pious horror, but those "who would not for the world" make any change in the position of their sex, who are inclined to exact an unreasonable amount of outward homage and observance from men, and in some cases to actually tyrannise over them. I should not have thought Mrs. Knagge was one of these, however, if it had not been for what you tell me, combined with the fact that Major Knagge is very emphatic upon any theme touching the subordination of women. When I hear men in public exceedingly self-assertive and loud in their assumption of supreme authority, I generally suspect that at home they are what is popularly called henpecked.'

'You have evidently observed and thought a great deal more upon this subject than I have, little woman; and I should very much like to know what the dissatisfied of your sex think they have to complain of, for it seems to me they have the advantage over us in most things, and that this crusade against supposed injustice is a sort of tilting at shadows—harmless, perhaps, but rather ridiculous. Surely they are much better off in their sheltered position, looked

up to as they are in all civilised countries with consideration and respect, than if they were to change places with men.'

'But, my wise brother, we do not want to change places with men.'

'I am very ignorant, no doubt, but ——'

'I could not think of contradicting you. You are like the bird-fancier who assures us that his larks very much prefer restraint and the occasional petting and food he gives them to the liberty which is their natural inheritance; no persuasion, however, will induce him to open the cage-door and give them a chance. You ask what happy women, such as Madeline and I, have to complain of?—personally nothing. It is not for themselves they are discontented, but for those (and, mind you, they are the majority) who are not "sheltered," and are far from meeting with universal consideration and respect. Whatever may be the lot of a favoured few, women cannot, properly speaking, be called free until every law which discriminates between man and woman, to the injury of the latter, is done away with.'

'In some countries—in the East, for instance—I should say women might with justice complain of want of freedom and of much that is unfair; but amongst ourselves really I cannot see ——'

'Where is the difference between the Mahommedan decree which forbids fools, madmen, or women to call the hours of prayer, and the English law which amongst all those who possess the necessary property qualification denies a vote only to lunatics, felons, and women. It is a very heinous offence, no doubt, to have been born a woman; but seeing that none of us have been consulted upon this matter, one would think that something less than a life-long expiation ——'

'Pray, Goody, please to moderate the rancour of your tongue,' said Sir Henry in feigned alarm; 'what is it so dreadfully wrong in our Constitution? What is it you claim on behalf of your deeply injured sex?'

'Nothing more nor less than an equal chance in the race of life, equal incentives to study, fair rewards for labour; it is not necessary to be unhappy oneself to feel the unhappiness of others, and I know too well what suffering the want of justice in these matters causes.' A low whistle of supreme astonishment, suppressed almost as soon as heard, showed some of the surprise Sir Henry felt at his light-hearted sister's unusual earnestness. 'Oh, there are a great many other things about which women have a right to be discontented,' she went on. 'Try to reverse our positions and look at the question from the opposite point of view. What would English *men* say if forced to contribute to the support of a government which they have no voice either in electing or rejecting; if, in nine cases out of ten, they could not obtain doctors of their own sex; if the endowments of girls' schools amounted to ten times as much as that expended upon boys; if the girls of well-to-do parents appropriated, as a matter of course, the bulk of the family property; if amongst the poorer classes men and boys received always less pay for equal work; if, while young women in shops and places of business in London and other large towns, had many chances of wholesome recreation in the evenings, their debating societies, their reading-rooms, their chess-clubs, their mechanics' institutes, supported mainly by charitable contributions, it were taken for granted that young men of the same class do not require any special recreation, but that after a day of dull, incessant toil, they should be contented (if respectable) to spend the evening in the comfortless little bedroom of their cheap lodgings? You look surprised.'

'Not so much at your words, my dear, as at yourself, and at the extraordinary development of the little girl whom I left a very few years ago in short frocks, scampering across the downs, climbing from rock to rock like a young kid, and evolving only the crudest ideas upon every subject. If all your sex have been advancing in like manner, and everything you have been saying is not to be looked upon in the light of special pleading, I shall be obliged to grant that women's claims

to the franchise and other masculine "privileges," so-called, deserve at least to be treated with consideration.'

'Exactly, and I am sure you could not have a better opportunity for looking into these questions than by talking to Madeline and Professor Wray. There are many things quite as important as the party measures, to which, in view of standing for our borough you acknowledge you have been giving so much time lately.'

'Very likely, and no doubt these women questions are coming to the front amazingly. When I went to India one heard next to nothing of them, and now scarcely a month passes but one or other of the magazines rings changes on the theme, and even in this out of the way region I find there is no escape.'

'But you do not really wish to escape, you are going to stay with us a few days longer, like a dear good fellow, I know?'

Sir Henry looked down at the bright, but earnest little face raised to his, and found it more than his affection and good nature could withstand. 'So be it then,' he replied, resigning himself with good grace, 'ever since you were so high,' holding his cane about two feet from the ground, 'you have always contrived to turn your big elder brother around with the smallest of your little fingers, and now Fred, too, poor fellow!' he soliloquised, shaking his head, 'has come under the yoke; who would dream, to hear her melting eloquence upon women's undue subordination, that she could be such a despot?'

'At any rate,' replied his sister, laughing, 'I have, like Nancy Polwhele, the proud consciousness that my rule is a beneficent one.'

'Polwhele! Polwhele! Oh, yes, I recollect, at the south lodge. It is high time I should get to know all my people at Tregarthen. Wasn't it her husband who, as the Scotch sexton put it, was so uncommon wasteful in wives?'

'I think so, Nancy is his third at any rate, and was warned more than once against his drinking and unsteady habits.

"Never you mind," she said, "I know what I'm about," and so it proved she did. Papa always said *that* woman was a genius. One Saturday night, not long after their marriage, Polwhele returned home in a condition rather unsteady than otherwise, having spent all his wages in drink, and proceeded systematically to break cups and saucers, plates and dishes, every brittle thing that he could lay his hands upon. Nancy did not attempt to interfere; on Sunday she let him sleep himself sober, and on Monday she said nothing by way of reproach as he went off to his work in the fields looking rather ashamed of himself. At mid-day she took him his dinner as usual tied up in a clean handkerchief; the hungry man seized the pasty, opened his clasp-knife and eagerly cut off a piece, but alas! instead of the expected slices of potato and turnip and savoury pieces of meat, the crust contained nothing but fragments of broken earthenware. "You brought me no money, and I had only a little flour in the house," Nancy said, quietly, in reply to his blank look, "so I did the best I could." It was by such practical sermons as these, without any scolding or quarrelling, that she succeeded in entirely reforming him.'

'I wish I could think it would be as much for the general well-being that the women who take up the public questions we have been discussing should have things all their own way, for I have no doubt that, whatever they insist upon, *that* sooner or later they are sure to obtain; whether they or any one else will be the happier for it is another question. For my part I think it is quite possible that in striving to exact to the utmost their rights, they will find themselves in the position of the traveller who, because a certain railroad allowed passengers to carry a hundred-and-fifty pounds weight of luggage, thought it a pity not to get all that belonged to him, and so, whether he wanted it or not, always travelled with the full amount, to his infinite inconvenience in going from station to station.'

'If your knowledge of facts equalled your aptness of illustration, sir, you would be a formidable antagonist; but wait till you have talked to Madeline and the Professor, and see if you

will dare to bring forward good metaphors any longer in support of a bad cause. The point is though that you are going to stay, that is settled?'

'Well, yes, on one condition.'

'Namely?'

'Namely, that for every quarter of an hour Miss Acton has to discourse upon women's rights, I shall have at least fifteen minutes given to me for the consideration of men's wrongs. Eh, Nep, old boy, don't you think that's a fair bargain.' The fine old retriever who had been lately showing symptoms that the conversation was getting out of his depth, gave a short ecstatic bark at being personally addressed, and appeared, so far as tail and eye could speak, to be profoundly impressed by the turn affairs were taking, as Mrs. Silverton with open satisfaction replied,——

'Very well, you shall have your way, only I warn you, you had better find something besides your own unaided wits to fall back upon. Let me suggest De Kock's *Madame Pantalon*, or Besant's *Revolt of Man*, or Goldwin Smith's logical and courteous pamphlet.'

'Spare me, spare me, I feel already as if I were back at Oxford, and going in for "greats" after only a week's preparation. I know your friend perfectly without an introduction.—

> "She has views upon co-education,
> And the principal needs of the nation,
> And she writes in a handwriting clerky,
> And she talks with an emphasis jerky,
> And she paints upon tiles in the sweetest of styles,
> But she doesn't know chicken from turkey."'

'Doesn't she though, if it is Madeline to whom you are so profanely referring, you had better attend the Kensington School of Cookery first, if you mean to cross swords with her on this subject. But that reminds me I have some things to look after in the house, and I really think the kindest thing I can do is to leave you to evolve a few ideas from your cigar, which

is, I know, an aid to reflection that the masculine mind usually finds indispensable.'

'As a sedative, yes, in such cases as the present. If you would only have let me believe that your friend would have mistaken me (chicken as I am) for a turkey, my spirit would have revived within me, as it is, well,—I think a tonic will be advisable, so I shall stroll over Hillsborough—come Nep, old boy!—and down to the bathing cove. Do not keep luncheon for me, I shall take my flask and sandwich-tin.'

CHAPTER II.

'Je ne suis ni pour le droit féminin contre le droit masculin, ni pour le droit masculin contre le droit féminin, je suis pour le droit humain.'

EMILE DE GIRARDIN.

'They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak,
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think,
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.'

LONGFELLOW.

'They err, believe me, who set down
As merely passion-blinded
Those ladies whom we title with
The epithet "strong-minded." '

'Think nought a trifle, though it small appear,
Small sands the mountain, moments make the year,
And trifles life.'

'Let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn to be
All that harms not distinctive womanhood.'

TENNYSON, *The Princess.*

CHAPTER II.

A STRONG-MINDED WOMAN.

It was the loveliest of August mornings when Sir Henry Tregarthen, leaving his sister to look after her guests and her domestic duties, started for a brisk walk over Hillsborough, a climb down one of its most inaccessible sides, and a plunge into the water below sparkling in a beautiful little cove that nestled confidingly into the embrace of the grim North Devon cliffs. It was nearly an hour before either dog or master—both being semi-amphibious creatures—could think their swim had lasted long enough; but although Nep, or, to speak with due respect, Neptune, loved the ocean as behoved its king, while Sir Henry's bathing propensities were so notorious that he would never have earned commendation from the inn chambermaid as 'a nice clean gentleman which made no splashing, used the corner of his towel, and guv no trouble,' they were both destined on this particular morning to have more of the refreshing element than they had bargained for.

Scarcely had they finished their luncheon before clouds began to gather in the sky, and just as Sir Henry had settled himself with his back against an accommodating rock, his hat over his eyes, and a cigar in his mouth, prepared thoroughly to enjoy the *dolce far niente,* which is the legitimate offspring of active physical exertions, a heavy drop, and then another, and another, fell upon his ungloved hands.

'If it be true that he will do most who knows how to do nothing thoroughly,' he said, slowly rousing himself, 'I was just thinking I ought to have a career before me, but it is very evident that I am not to be allowed to exercise my capacity for idleness this afternoon.'

'Come Nep, wake up old boy! you are not half a dog: why didn't you tell me it was beginning to rain?'

Nep's only explanation was a short expressive bark and a flourish of his magnificent tail, but he had so little doubt, on seeing his master rise, of the right course to be pursued under the circumstances, that, taking the initiative, he bounded up the zig-zag path on the face of the cliff, growing more and more excited as Sir Henry's fleetness of foot made it almost a neck-and-neck race between them. On reaching the top they were somewhat out of the ordinary route, but Sir Henry, who during the last week or two had explored the neighbourhood to some purpose, turned into a lane overarched by trees and lined with moisture-loving ferns, and soon they emerged into daylight on a hill that by pedestrians was often chosen as a short cut from Ilfracombe to Crag's Nest, the carriage-road winding nearly two miles round. They had still some distance to walk, however, before reaching home, and Sir Henry was not sorry to see the clouds already breaking; but it continued to rain, and it was with some surprise, therefore, that on turning a corner in this little-frequented road he saw just ahead a solitary figure, evidently that of a lady, and a young one to judge by her slender figure and brisk elastic step. It could not be his sister, and surely none of her acquaintances would choose to mount the hill in such a heavy thunder-shower. His doubts were soon, however, set at rest; she stopped at a point where the road branched to the right and left, and waiting until he came up, said, with a slightly heightened colour, but no hesitation of manner,

'Excuse me, but can you tell me which of these roads leads to Crag's Nest?'

'Crag's Nest is over the brow of this hill to the right, but I am going there myself and shall have great pleasure in showing you the way,' he replied, raising his hat an extra inch or two in tribute to the vision of a lovely, and at this moment flushed as it was with exercise, very girlish-looking face which inspired him with sudden anxiety to know something more of its owner.

'Thank you,' was the frank reply. 'I feel quite humiliated, for I thought when once I had taken my bearings correctly I should have no difficulty in finding my way from the station, but I must have taken a wrong turning somewhere or I should have been under cover by this time.'

'I am not surprised at any stranger missing the road, it would have been more wonderful if you had not,' replied Sir Henry, courteously, while all the time he kept saying to himself,—

'Station—bound for Crag's Nest—surely it must—no, it cannot possibly be that this gentle, soft-voiced girl, with her gold-brown hair and modest eyes, should be Nellie's strong-minded friend, Miss Acton, besides she was not expected until nearly dinner-time, the carriage was ordered to meet the six o'clock train, I know—still—shall I risk the supposition? —Well, it can do no harm.'

'I am Mrs. Silverton's brother,' he said, turning to his companion, 'and if I am not wrong in thinking you are the friend she was expecting from London, I must apologise on her behalf for your not having been met at the station.'

'Oh, I concluded at once that Nellie had not received my letter saying that I would take an earlier train, and as the flys at the station did not look tempting while the country and weather at that moment did, I decided to find my way on foot, leaving my luggage to follow; a not very wise proceeding perhaps, but I do so enjoy a good walk.'

'I cannot personally regret your decision, and I am sure my sister will be delighted to have you a few hours sooner than she expected; but if you had been in Devonshire or Cornwall before you would have known that the "Grandmother of all buckets," as the Persians call drenches like this afternoon's, is very apt to come unannounced; we have no climate in this part of the world, only weather, as some one with more truth than politeness said of us, and so being accustomed to eccentric meteorological conditions we are more or less prepared for them, but you——'

'You see that I am equally superior to circumstances,' with a glance at the macintosh which, though not 'a thing of beauty' in itself, lost half its ugliness thanks to the graceful contour of the figure it protected, 'I am accustomed to go about in all sorts of weather.'

'You seem amused,' said Sir Henry, as he noticed a twitching of the lips and an unmistakable dimple on the cheek nearest him.

'To tell the truth,' replied Madeline, no longer attempting to control the mischievous smile which had been gradually irradiating her face as Sir Henry spoke, 'I was thinking that the contented old lady who said, "We ought to be glad to have bad weather rather than none at all," could not have been a west countrywoman, for I always notice that Cornish and Devonshire people are hard upon their own climate.'

'It is very good-natured of you not to quarrel with it after such a reception.'

'I hope my magnanimity may never have worse to try it, for, in the first place, See! it scarcely rains at all now; how lovely the country looks! and in the second I have been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of two of the Crag's Nest party without the formality of an introduction,' she replied, turning to pat Neptune who appeared to be as much impressed by their new acquaintance as was his master, and from this moment kept pushing his nose against her hand to intimate that he had no objection to be further noticed. 'Please forgive my putting you in the same category,' she continued, glancing up from the dog to his master, 'but I have the most unbounded respect for dogs.'

'And a very limited one for men so I understand?'

'If you really think that,' said Madeline, with some amusement, 'I am afraid you must, in this respect, be like the old Scotch professor drawing a conclusion because it will not follow.'

'I do not know that I should quarrel with you much,' said Sir Henry, 'even if you felt the contempt which you are polite

enough to disclaim, for in certain moods I am inclined myself to think with Victor Hugo that "a butterfly is a marvellous work of nature which does its Maker credit, but that the human animal is a profound mistake."'

'I cannot agree with you quite, for of all branches of sciences I think psychology offers—but you are only joking,' and Madeline, catching the expression of her companion's face, laughed at having been beguiled into a serious interpretation of a mere absurdity so obviously meant to draw her out.

'Then you do not think that "the boasted lord of nature is at the best a feeble creature"?' Sir Henry persisted.

'Generally speaking, no,' Madeline replied, guardedly, 'If Nellie has given you that idea of me——'

'Oh, no, she only told me—well, in fact, she said quite the contrary, but I find it difficult to shake off the idea that the lady-supporters of women's rights think, with the King of Brobdignag, that men are "the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."'

'So far from that we count many of the most thoughtful men among our warmest friends and supporters, and though nothing is more common, I know, than the idea that women who ask for themselves and others freedom to live their own lives, untrammelled by ignorance and prejudice, are antagonistic to men; are trying, in short, to establish a sort of rivalry, I assure you that it is not the case.' Madeline spoke quickly and with rising colour, but as her companion only looked at her with interested inquiry as though waiting for her to finish her sentence, she went on in a low voice, with slow and half-hesitating accents; 'where interests are so indissolubly linked together as are those of men and women, there can be, I think, no real antagonism of position or action; it is only the time-honoured accumulation of prejudice obscuring their better judgment which makes otherwise reasonable people maintain that the petition for equal legislation, for leave to develop the

faculties with which they have been endowed, is taken up by women in a spirit of rebellion against tyrants and oppressors rather than as an appeal to the reason and tenderness of those whom they know to be noble and true at heart.'

'I am very glad to have it on your authority,' replied Sir Henry, with quite a new interest in the subject under discussion, 'that there is no bitterness of feeling such as I suspected; but I must confess there has seemed to me something very much like it in one or two of the remarks in some of the papers you have sent my sister, a certain amount of hardness, and (if you will allow me to say so of arguments for which most probably you claim the monopoly of logic) a onesidedness which did not impress me favourably.'

'I suppose it is sometimes thought advisable to fight people with their own weapons; at any rate, those who see only one side of a question ought to be shown the other; and if here and there a too strong feeling of partisanship shows itself, I assure you that as a rule it is, as I said before, against ignorance and prejudice in the abstract we contend, not against reasonable and liberal-minded men, many of whom are amongst our warmest friends and supporters.'

'But might not the same be said by your opponents, that they do not mean any disrespect to women in general, but only object to the outrageous claims of a very small minority.'

'It rests with those who rank themselves amongst our opponents to prove, firstly, that the claims made are outrageous; secondly, that they are so feebly urged as to be unworthy of attention.'

'They would have very little chance against you, I am sure, but please remember that personally my attitude is rather that of a friendly critic than an enemy. I do not want to oppose a movement in which my sister takes so keen an interest; which my brother-in-law, although a Conservative, has been taught to support; and which that thoughtfulest of the thoughtful, Professor Wray, openly favours; but at the same time I cannot profess to believe what I doubt, or support what does not com-

mend itself to my reason; woman's suffrage, for instance, the throwing open to them all professions without reserve, and many other things which I believe are insisted upon with more or less emphasis.'

'I can quite understand these things seeming unreasonable at first to any one who has not thought much about them,' was the reply; 'and I have not forgotten the story of the energetic old woman who kept on scrubbing her kitchen floor so often and so hard, that at last a hole appeared, through which, by-and-by, she fell into the cellar and broke her arm, so I certainly should not have introduced the subject, having a wholesome dread of indiscreet zeal; still I should like to persuade you that the advocates of women's advancement are not mere madcap reformers who are trying to overthrow nature, to sweep away all private virtues, and "sap the very basis of all civilised society."'

'If you will only undertake to argue out the subject with me I shall be delighted, and to tell the truth I believe Nellie intended to propose something in the shape of a general discussion to you and the rest of the party, for with the enthusiasm of a neophyte she has made up her mind to my conversion; I must warn you, however, that I have the character of being an obstinate fellow who rarely changes his mind, and, unlike Neptune, never knows when he's beaten.'

'So much the better for truth when you do espouse it,' said Madeline; 'but what a lovely view.' They had just reached the summit of the hill, and nestling into one of its hollows below lay Crag's Nest, whose well-kept lawn and gardens stretched terrace beyond terrace down the shelving side of the cliff, while the sea below lay shimmering in the rays of the sinking sun, which seemed to shine with redoubled power after its temporary extinction. The house itself, once pure Elizabethan, had gradually assumed an individuality of its own, not to be recognised of architects, but it looked, nevertheless, picturesque and homelike, protected by a grove of pine-trees on the bleakest sides, and covered to the very attic windows with

flowering creepers, in bold contrast to which stood out the grand headlands and rock-strewn summits of the hills behind. 'One must live in a city to appreciate a scene like this,' said Madeline, leaning on the gate, and drawing long happy breaths of infinite content. 'I think even the cynical Frenchman could hardly have said here that "nature was too green and not well lighted."'

Her companion, however, was apparently more interested at this moment in the contemplation of human nature in the person of the fair woman whose face he had been studying undetected for the last few minutes. 'I must say,' he replied, with some irrelevance as it seemed to her, 'it requires no little moral courage and disinterestedness on the part of a lady to take up a cause which, in many instances, meets with nothing but ridicule or contempt.' In strange contradiction to his usual character, Sir Henry's opinions appeared to have been rapidly modified since the morning, when he had had small sympathy to bestow upon 'feminine reformers' as he called them.

'On the contrary,' replied Madeline, 'I think it would argue the most culpable selfishness and cowardice not to oppose injustice which might be remedied if people, men and women too, were not so apathetic, and instead of saying "really I cannot understand what there is in this particular form of abuse to make it worth spending time and money over," or "that is such a trivial matter, what is the use of taking it to heart," were to rouse themselves to a true understanding of the evils which surround them, and a determination to do their best, little though it may be, to surmount them.'

'Whatever saves people from the trouble of thinking,' said Sir Henry, 'is, I suppose, sure to be popular; one appreciates all the more, though, individuality and thoroughness when one does find them.' His words were emphasised by tone and glance; but Madeline's face wore a look of abstraction as she gazed earnestly far out to sea, and certainly, even if she heard his words, made no personal application of the same. Her companion watched her with an expression half of admiring

astonishment, half of disappointment, that she appeared so self-sufficing, so composed, so different to most pretty girls it had been his lot to meet. 'If it be true, as Steele says, that "one must think well to look well," ' he said to himself, 'then no doubt Nellie's friend carries a passport in her face that must be available everywhere, still I am not sure that an entire absence of self-consciousness on the part of a woman is, at all times, attractive; however, it is a consolation that Miss Acton in the flesh does not answer to the portrait of a Medusa, which I have been carrying about with me for the last twenty-four hours; she is very straightforward and pleasant to talk to, has plenty of character, and would make a stanch friend no doubt, though, probably, an unsatisfactory wife, even were she not much too self-reliant to think of the possibility of marrying, or to encourage any one else to think of it;' and having thus summed up the character of his new acquaintance on the whole so favourably, he was quite prepared, when they entered the house some five minutes later, to meet his sister's questioning glance with a caress more reassuring than any words, and so the subject of his urgent business in London was dropped by mutual consent.

CHAPTER III.

'Co-education of the sexes is preferred where practised, because it is (1) *natural*, following the usual structure of the family and of society; (2) *customary*, or in harmony with the habits and sentiments of every-day life and law; (3) *impartial*, affording to both sexes equal opportunities for culture; (4) *economical*, using school-funds to the best advantage; (5) *convenient*, both to superintendent and teachers, in assigning, grading, instruction, and discipline; and (6) *beneficial* to the minds, morals, habits, and development of the pupils.' — *Pamphlet published by the United States Bureau of Education, containing the results of an inquiry into the effects of co-educating the sexes in 340 cities and large towns in the Union.*

'On the cultivation of the minds of women depends the wisdom of men.' SHERIDAN.

'Pourquoi aurions nous donc un privilége? Est-ce parceque nous sommes les plus forts? Mais c'est une véritable injustice. Nous employons toutes sortes de moyens pour leur abattre le courage. Les forces seraient égales si l'éducation l'était aussi. Eprouvons les dans les talents que l'éducation n'a point affaiblis, et nous verrons si nous sommes si forts.' MONTESQUIEU, *Lettres Persannes*, 38.

'The intellectual and moral differences between the sexes seem to me entirely the result of education, using that word in its most extensive sense to comprehend not merely the instruction received from teachers, but the habits of mind imposed by situation, or by the physical organization of the human frame.' DUGALD STEWART.

'Long prejudice, an inferior education, and a perennial legal inequality and injustice, have created that apparent intellectual inferiority [of women] which has been converted into an argument of continued oppression.' MAZZINI, *On the Duties of Man.*

CHAPTER III.

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

It was, on the whole, a pleasant little party assembled round the dinner-table at Crag's Nest the following evening; not too large to allow of the conversation being general, and not made up of such incongruous elements as to prevent free and friendly discussion of whatever subject might be uppermost. Mr. Silverton, the host, looked what he was—a well-bred, honest, kindly, country gentleman, fond of out-door life and exercise, but reading dutifully his *Times*, his *Quarterly* and *Saturday Review;* a Conservative, as the Silvertons had always been, but taking a genuine interest in the progress of matters social, scientific, and political, and occasionally alarming his more rigid Tory acquaintances by his general breadth of view.

It was not possible to see him and his young wife five minutes together without feeling that, different though they were in character, they understood each other perfectly, while he was evidently as proud of her—her brightness and intelligence, her sparkling and yet not thoughtless nature—as when he brought her to Crag's Nest a bride six months ago. But his manner was gentle and courteous to all women, even to the not very attractive specimen of the sex who sat on his right hand, giving one ear to his discourse, the other to whatever her husband might be saying on the opposite side of the table; for Mrs. Knagge, although to a chance acquaintance she might seem as neutral tinted mentally as she was physically, was, with all her gentleness of voice and manner, and seemingly delicate physique, a born autocrat, who since her husband's retirement from the army, where all regimental minutiæ received the benefit of her maternal supervision, had with

doubly strong, though soft and invisible reins, kept well in hand husband, dependents, and any friends who could be brought to believe in her. The Major, happily for him, had not the remotest idea that he was under control, and no one knew this better than his wife, who encouraged his somewhat didactic and overbearing manner in public, sometimes even occasionally joining in with a modest disclaimer of any leaning towards feminine independence, well knowing that she controlled the springs which would in a moment turn the gallant Major round, and twist him into any form she pleased.

He was a stout, florid, and, on the whole, perhaps, rather imposing looking man, with—as befitted his profession—a remarkable development of the organs that to phrenologists betoken combativeness; his forehead, on the other hand, was of a somewhat retiring disposition, which accounted, possibly, for his not being an intellectual giant, although he had in early youth spent some years at a great public school, where he succeeded in acquiring a smattering of Greek and Latin, a vile handwriting, and a tolerably inaccurate knowledge of elementary arithmetic; his name had also appeared on the books of a college which, as somebody said, ought to be the most learned in the world, since 'most of the men brought a little learning with them and no one ever carried any away.' But however this may be, there is no doubt that Major Knagge since that time had accumulated not a few ideas and prejudices, while nothing (next to fox-hunting) gave him more delight than to air these ideas and do battle for these prejudices with some opponent worthy of his mettle.

Professor Wray, who seemed to appreciate his good fortune in sitting between his hostess and Miss Acton, whom he had known from a child, was a man apparently of about forty, with a slight stoop, a long beard which, hiding all the lower part of his face, made more effective the penetrating glance of his deep-set eyes, and an almost abnormal development of forehead, rendered still more conspicuous by the thinness of the hair upon his temples.

He was talking with great warmth and interest to his companions, when suddenly he became aware of certain glances of almost pathetic alarm (as a few words of their conversation were carried across the table) being cast upon him by Miss Wynter, Mr. Silverton's aunt, a good, kind-hearted old lady, and intelligent withal, but a foe to innovations, and inclined to be shocked by any approach to freedom of thought and discussion. It was not, therefore, a matter for wonder that her eyes grew rounder and her lips thinner, while her neat grey curls shook excitedly in her keen disapprobation of what she heard.

'The experiment of mixed schools has been very exhaustively tried in America,' Professor Wray was saying; 'and though, no doubt, the question of the moral, intellectual, and physical education of girls is a very wide and complicated one, and depends on many varying conditions of individual character and circumstances, yet I cannot help thinking that if we were to adopt in England generally the system of co-education, we should find in it a solution for many of our educational difficulties.'

'I fear,' said Madeline, 'that it will be a long time before the prejudices of English society on this point are overcome; people will not see that it is to co-education we must look to cultivate the highest bonds of sympathy between men and women; and so boys and girls, who are destined in the future to form close and life-long connexions, are taught not only apart, but on entirely different lines.'

'I trust the prejudices of English society against these new ideas,' said Miss Wynter, gravely, 'will never diminish. I am afraid it would be a sad day if ever ——' a slow shake of the head finished what the speaker could not find words strong enough to express.

'I really think,' answered Madeline, smiling kindly at her critic across the table, 'if we examine the dangerous-looking ghosts, we shall find them nothing worse than scooped turnips illuminated by farthing dips. To begin with, the subject we

were discussing has, at any rate, not the demerit of absolute novelty.'

'So far from being a new idea,' said Professor Wray, in reply to her glance, 'it was, as you know, advocated more than 2200 years ago by the wisest of Greek philosophers. Seneca and Plutarch also held some views on the training of girls far in advance of many modern conceptions of what constitutes a liberal education.'

'What is this I hear?' exclaimed Major Knagge, who scented battle from afar. 'Can any one in their senses really advocate teaching girls and boys indiscriminately, and allowing them to learn, the same things?'

'I am afraid we must plead guilty,' said Professor Wray; 'and to take just one point I refer to the matter of physical training. No girls would be the worse, and the whole human race would undoubtedly be the better, if healthy growth and development were universally as much encouraged in girls as it is in boys.'

'I think boys also,' said Madeline, 'would be no less the gainers if each one of them were as a matter of course taught (I will not say needlework, for fear of sowing dragon's teeth) some simple mechanical employment by which their hands might be kept out of mischief, and which in after years they might fall back upon, as women do, to relieve their feelings or rest an overtired brain.'

'It always has seemed to me,' said Mr. Silverton, 'a very sensible notion to let boys of every rank learn some trade by way of pastime: carving, or book-binding, or carpentering; but I think we should draw the line at needlework. It always strikes me as an effeminate thing for a man to busy himself as some do with embroidery, or knitting, or crewel-work; a woman's delicate fingers, on the other hand, seem made for such employments.'

'Men always drift from sense into sentiment upon such subjects as this,' said Mrs. Silverton, with a mischievous glance at her husband. 'For my part, I like to see men able to em-

ploy their fingers usefully in needlework or anything else, instead of having no other resource from reading or writing but lounging or loafing about, so ashamed of possessing hands that they carefully hide them in their pockets, while in their conscious idleness they are so uncomfortable themselves as to make every one else the same. I mean to keep a stock of paper-knives and uncut books in the drawing-room for their benefit.'

'You are a little severe,' said Miss Acton; 'they do not, many of them (I am speaking of those to whom the name of "gentleman" applies of course), take refuge in their pockets, even when they apparently find their hands a superfluity; and I know many men who, when kept at home by weather or any other reason, have always some mechanical occupation to fall back upon; either, like Professor Wray, they are naturalists and have specimens to sort, mount, and classify; or they are clever with their pencil, or at wood-carving; or, if anglers, it may be fly-making. I do not think men need necessarily sew or perpetrate with a needle impossible flowers, and call it art embroidery; but, at the same time, though elaborate stitching may never be useful to them in after years, I quite agree with you that needlework in its training for eye and hand is a valuable branch of education both for boys and girls, at least in the earlier standards, though there is an inordinate amount of time devoted to it still in many girls' schools, so much so as to be a serious hindrance to their education.'

'Even you,' replied Mrs. Silverton, 'seem to doubt whether any knowledge of sewing, except as a training for eye and hand, is necessary for men. But I am quite sure that soldiers and sailors, whether officers or privates, to say nothing of travellers and backwoodsmen, must often regret their want of training and clumsiness in the use of a needle and thread. I am sure, Major Knagge, you will endorse what I say?'

'My opinion,' replied that gentleman, 'sorry as I am to contradict a lady, is that whatever a man may be driven to by extremity, the sewing on of buttons and straps is for him a very undignified and unsuitable occupation.'

'It never struck me in that light,' replied Sir Henry, concealing an involuntary smile at the irresistibly comic affectation of being utterly crushed with which his sister turned towards him, 'the dignity that wants nursing cannot be worth much; but, at the same time, I do not quite agree that it would be good for boys and girls to be trained upon exactly parallel lines. Some definer of differences said, that "the natural impulse of girls is to do exactly what they are told to do; of boys, to do exactly what they are told not to do;" and I agree with him thoroughly in his opinion that women are the "better half of creation"; but no one can deny that the mind, the sentiments, the whole temperament of the one sex differs *toto cælo* from that of the other, and that therefore what would be perfectly fitting for a woman might be effeminate for a man, and *vice versâ*.'

'The minds of women I should say,' replied the Professor, 'differ no more from those of men than that of one man or woman from another. The bane of our educational system in the past has been the universal assumption that intellectually and morally girls were to be judged by a different standard from boys, while, as a fact, the very faults with which they are charged are just the result of this system and nothing else; taught to skim surfaces, how should they have been thorough and accurate, decked with a mere veneering of trifling and superficially-learnt accomplishments, which have been well compared to the female ant's wings, meant to bear their possessors to a settlement and then to be nipped off and discarded? Are vanity, emptiness, and utter frivolity an extraordinary result? Why, you might as well feed boys upon solid wholesome food, and girls upon jellies and trifles, and in explanation of the inevitable result say that it is natural to a girl's constitution to be feeble and sickly.'

'But does not the attraction between the two sexes in a great measure lie in these very differences?'

'In one sense, yes, though I have often heard the word effeminate applied to men, and masculine to women in reproach

for those very qualities, the more general interchange of which would be to the advantage of both; a boy's domestic and moral training has in many ways been just as much neglected in the past as the full development of a girl's physical and intellectual faculties. How rarely have boys been taught the virtues of self-denial, gentleness, purity? How still more rarely in girls have courage, abstract reasoning, thoroughness, accuracy, a strict sense of honour, been thought worthy of cultivation? By assimilating the education of the two sexes, by enabling men and women to share those subjects of intellectual interest which are the noblest of life's pleasures, by having one standard for both of education, work, citizenship, by preparing them equally for the serious business of life, not making one sex more than the other dependent on the chances of marriage, you will, so far from putting a barrier between them, only, as Miss Acton suggested, give them a broader platform of sympathy, common interests, mutual understanding, and helpfulness, upon which to meet and prove that the so-called "new" systems of education have brought about no revolution of the primary laws of nature.'

Sir Henry glanced involuntarily at Madeline on reference being made to her, but seeing her eyes turned towards the speaker with a new earnestness, a something between admiration and reverence in their expression, he somewhat abruptly changed the subject. 'I was going to ask you just now,' he said, addressing the Professor, 'in what way you considered the teaching of boys and girls together would prove a solution of many existing educational difficulties?'

'Would it not on economic grounds alone prove a very great advantage? If girls and women are in the future to have the benefit of endowments, which it is but fair that they should share with their brothers, the only means to avoid diminishing the educational privileges that boys now possess in our grammar-schools and other endowed institutions, is to teach the two side by side, effecting at once by this means a saving both in accomodation and in teachers.'

'It would never work, my dear sir—would never work,' said Major Knagge.

'I think the best answer to that is that wherever the system has been tried it has proved a complete success; as, for instance, north of the Tweed; Mr. Jolly, the Government Inspector of Schools for Scotland, gives the strongest testimony in its favour; the effect on both sexes he considers so good, that he would, he says, be very sorry to see the practice discontinued. And *à propos* of this, he mentions a clergyman holding a high position in Glasgow who, though educating his daughters at home, sent them to a large mixed school for a certain part of every day for the sake of its mental and moral effects.* From the United States we have exactly the same testimony.'

'I was told by an American lady not long ago,' said Madeline, 'that at one time she had the strongest personal prejudice against mixed schools; she was herself a very successful teacher, but when it was proposed that an existing school for boys should join hers for girls, on the plea that it would improve the former, her reply was, "Why should I on that account sacrifice my girls?" Having been persuaded at last to give the experiment a trial, she honestly said, "You should not have made your arguments so narrow, since my school has consisted half of boys I find the change has improved both, and my girls are more ambitious, more obedient, and more ladylike." I need scarcely say that she is now one of the warmest adherents of the system.'

'I should have said,' answered the Major, 'that as regards the girls, the more natural result would have been to turn their silly little heads and fill them with frivolity and nonsense at the expense of their lessons.'

'You cannot be expected to change preconceived opinions at the first onslaught,' replied Professor Wray, 'but at the same time such facts as that just mentioned by Miss Acton are very stubborn things, and from what I have heard, observed, and

* See Pamphlet by A. W. Bennett, M.A. *Is it Desirable that Boys and Girls should be Taught Together?*

read upon the subject, it is my firm belief that so far from the constant companionship of boys and girls leading to frivolity and worse, where these evils have existed it has been due in a great measure to the unnatural system of isolating the two sexes at an age when they could only act and re-act upon each other for good; there is no reason why there should not exist between them the pure and healthy intercourse of brothers and sisters.'

'You would soon, then, have superannuated,' said Sir Henry, laughing, 'the mistress of a mixed school who hung a net across the recreation-ground, that her pupils, if they *must* sit side by side during lesson-time, should not at any rate play together. For my part I am ready to believe that the system might answer in elementary schools, but is the plan so desirable in the case of older pupils?'

'Here again we have the testimony of facts: you must have heard of the success of the "College for Men and Women" in London; of the Birmingham Institute again the reports are altogether favourable, while the president of the Leeds College for Men and Women gives as the result of his experience that the system of joint education has acted beneficially on both sexes.'

'If men and women,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'may sit side by side in church, at the theatre, or a lecture, what impropriety can there be in students of both sexes attending together systematic courses of instruction in subjects of useful practical knowledge, or contending as candidates in an examination.'

'I do not know,' replied her brother, 'that it was exactly the question of propriety that moved me—it may be that I spoke in the interests of knowledge—I was taking myself back mentally to dear old Magdalen, and wondering whether the presence of attractive girl-graduates would have had a beneficial influence upon us as regards steady work. Alas! my conscience answers most emphatically, "No."'

'For a time possibly not,' said the Professor, 'that is to say, so long as the distraction of novelty lasted; but men cannot

long withstand the example of earnestness in work set them by the majority of women-students. The admission of women to University College (and you will allow that I have had some experience there) has changed the whole tone of the place. The men behave now like gentlemen : whatever there may have been, loud or coarse, amongst a certain set, has, in very shame, departed at the presence of the women-students, most of whom (and I have observed them closely) are so much absorbed in their work, and (young though they may be) as a rule so steady and dignified, that any objection to their admission, or doubts as to its good influence must fall to the ground.'

'I do not question,' said Major Knagge, 'that on the surface the young people behave like a community of monks and nuns, but ——'

'Really, Major Knagge,' said Mrs. Silverton, with some warmth, 'you are as bad as Monsieur Revenant, and you will have sooner or later to acknowledge yourself quite as ignominiously beaten.'

'But who is Monsieur Revenant?'

'A French delegate who was sent some years since to inquire into, and find as many flaws as possible in the working of university co-education in America. The task appears to have been quite to his mind, for he was so strongly prejudiced as even to go the length of wandering night after night about the college precincts, in the sure hope of discovering clandestine meetings, secret correspondence, or *something* underhand going on between the students of different sexes. He was rewarded not exactly as he deserved, for no one shot him as a spy, but he had to return home acknowledging himself mistaken in all his preconceived ideas.'

'He must have had quite a formidable recantation to make,' said Professor Wray, 'if I may judge by what I have seen of French prejudices on kindred subjects to this. Badly as we have learnt the lesson that the more freedom of development is encouraged in our girls, and the fewer the artificial barriers which are raised between the two sexes, the higher is

the general moral tone of a nation, yet I think we are in advance of all other European countries. See the strictness with which young unmarried women in Italy, France, or Spain are kept from knowledge of the world and all intercourse with the opposite sex, except under the strictest espionage, and yet, as a whole, they will scarcely compare favourably with the American girl who, without being in any sense fast, is perfectly free and natural; who has ideas and is not ashamed of them; who meets your eye frankly, and is always ready with a civil reply even although you may not have had the benefit of a formal introduction. I refer to such girls as you may meet any day in the United States, travelling alone, self-reliant, fearless, and innocent, for to every man they are sisters or would be, in the very remote chance of their ever requiring protection against insult; while no woman, however censorious, would point the finger of scorn at them for doing what was customary.'

'Quite true,' said Sir Henry, 'and there is, no doubt, a great charm about a highly cultivated American woman, but your saying that we are in advance of our neighbours, the French, in these matters reminds me that M. Dupanloup who, if I mistake not, is the great champion in that country of advanced education for girls does not approve of mixed schools.'

'I remember,' said Madeline, 'he says, "Let girls learn everything they can, but always in the strictest privacy," as if any living being would have a chance of full and free development with hands and feet tied, and the free air and light excluded. We must allow though,' she added, 'that he has done a great deal for girls' education in his own and other countries, and that for a bishop of the Romish Church he is remarkably liberal, we can scarcely expect that he should have so completely thrown off old ideas as to believe in, much less to advocate, mixed schools and colleges.'

'But what one *has* a right to expect,' said Professor Wray, 'is that so-called Protestants should by this time have thrown

off the rags of mediæval monasticism to which are due these and many other prejudices that act as barriers and stumbling-blocks in the way of human progress.'

'Yes,' said Sir Henry, after a moment's pause, 'I should be very sorry to keep our English girls in cages, feeding them on chickweed or canary-seed; but, as the old lady said, "there must be some way between Celery [Scylla] and Cherubs [Charybdis]; because you keep out of the one, you needn't run smack into the other." A woman like poor Mrs. Pepys, whose gossiping husband bought her a new gown that "the poor wretch should have something wherewith to content her," may be looked upon, I suppose, as the insipid produce of no education and is not very attractive; but I think there is something still more alarming about the learned Mademoiselle de Launay who, unable to keep her favourite mathematics even out of matters purely sentimental, having observed that her lover in walking home with her in the evening, while formerly taking the two sides of a square through which they passed, now struck across the middle, remarked that his love must have diminished "in the inverse ratio between the diagonal of a rectangular parallelogram and the sum of two adjacent sides." In such a case the only wonder seems to me that the poor man ever became her lover, not that he ran away from her ultimately. Look at the *Femmes Savantes* of Molière again.'

'Those women,' said Madeline, 'were justly held up to ridicule, for they were nothing more nor less than pedants, profoundly ignorant and yet in their own eyes omniscient, they are no fair picture of learned woman, there is all the difference between real and superficial knowledge.'

'Hear, hear!' said the Professor. 'As George Eliot reminds us in speaking of Romola, "the cramming with Latin and Greek left her as much a woman as if she had done nothing all day but prick her fingers with a needle," the fullest cultivation and development of all her faculties ought to, and I believe does, bring out all that is most truly feminine in a girl's nature.'

'Ye—es. You are right about a smattering of knowledge, no doubt,' replied Sir Henry; but—I daresay I am prejudiced—but still I cannot help feeling that to give women a similar training to men would be to run the risk of depriving them of some of their most attractive qualities.'

'What are the qualities that my respected brother thinks so attractive in a woman,' asked Mrs. Silverton, 'and yet so easily spoiled that the fullest education is certain to take off their bloom? Does he think physical weakness desirable? If so, then, of course, there is nothing to be said against denying girls those active exercises considered necessary for the development of vigour in boys. Does he consider it charmingly feminine to be capricious, illogical, excitable, inaccurate? Then, by all means, stimulate the emotional and imaginative side of their character, and debar them from the severe studies that hold the balance true. If it is a charm for us to be nervous and helpless, then the right way is to nip in the bud any symptoms of self-reliance, and teach girls to think cowardice and dependence pretty and attractive. Oh, Harry, I really hope you are not quite so unreasonable as you seem, for it is just this dread of thoughtful, clever women, which some men assume, that makes many girls who would otherwise have been sensible enough, hide such ideas and knowledge as they possess, and often listen to and talk utter nonsense until both sexes are brought down to a common level of silliness.'

Sir Henry listened to the young matron's severe remarks with imperturbable good-humour, but apparently little of the earnestness which she would like to have seen in him. 'Are ladies really so much influenced by our opinion and so anxious to please us as this?' he asked, smiling; 'I should not have thought it though, I have heard of one case certainly of such ultra humility on a bride's part, that she refused to sign anything but a cross in the marriage-register, because the bridegroom could not write, and "it would never do," she said, "for a wife to know more than her husband."'

'A most becoming humility,' said Major Knagge, 'they are

safe to be a happy couple when the wife at the outset recognises her true position in the—er—marital relation. Men being—er—reasoning animals, and women, though very charming, yet none the less unreasoning creatures, they are wise to recognise their secondary place in nature.'*

'Which brings us back to our main argument,' said the Professor, 'I think it is men who, in this claim to a monopoly of reason, prove themselves unreasonable in holding as a natural deficiency what has been simply the result of education. Teach girls, as commonly as you do boys, logic, mathematics, and physical science, make them learn by understanding, not by rote, that is to say develop their reasoning faculties, and I'll warrant you will have no cause to complain of the average woman being more unreasonable and inconsequent than the average man.'

'My dear sir, do you mean to tell me that any kind of education will ever teach a woman to listen to reason that goes—er—in opposition to her feelings. No, no, men will be men, and women women, to the world's end; a woman's vision is—is—er—circumscribed, a man's takes a wider range; man is the pioneer, he goes before, he leads, women from their natural timidity can only be safe in following; if they do profess any decided—er—views upon religion, or etiquette, or what not, they are sure to be narrow and prejudiced.'

Mrs. Silverton raised her eyebrows slightly at the words 'narrowness' and 'prejudice,' but Madeline's face bore a look of genuine amusement as she quietly led the conversation back

* Lest any reader should think our typical opponent of women's advancement overdrawn, it may be as well to quote a few words from a letter of Dean Burgon's which appeared in the *Daily News* on April 24th, 1884. In speaking of the proposed admission of women to examinations for honours at Oxford, he says it is a "moral revolution", "disastrous to a woman's best interests"; she was from the Creation intended to be "the complement of man's being", "his chiefest earthly joy, but all this is brought to an end at once if you teach her to try to be (what she can never become) man's equal, much less man's superior. Henceforth, she will have to be kept down, &c., &c."

to the subject under discussion. 'So long as you teach women,' she replied, turning towards Major Knagge, 'that submission to authority and tradition are her only proper attitude, so long, I am afraid, the charge of narrowness and prejudice may be justly made against them; so long as it is held that reasoning faculties are a matter of sex and not of individual character and education, so long will shallowness and caprice take the place of that common-sense and intelligence in which we appear to you so strikingly deficient.'

'My dear young lady you must not think me—er—personal—the ladies present are, of course, excepted.'

'However grateful we may feel for the exception,' Madeline replied, with a smile and a slight bow by way of acknowledgment, 'I am afraid I cannot accept a personal compliment at the expense of womankind in general, and I know, like Pope, you hold that "most women have no characters at all"; but to show you that I bear no malice, I will make you a present of another equally appropriate epigram of his which, if you do not know it, may be useful on a future occasion. "Women are like riddles," he says, "not only because they are at first unintelligible, but also because when once found out they please no longer."'

The Major was one of those happy people so protected by an impenetrable shield of *amour propre* against any arrows of sarcasm, that he never could see a joke against himself, so while Madeline stopped short rather, suddenly fearing that the love of repartee was leading her beyond the bounds of courtesy, she was reassured by seeing her opponent solemnly produce his note-book with the object, as she had suggested, of securing the epigram for a future occasion.

Sir Henry, whose chivalrous nature could not endure the risk of being associated with Major Knagge and his notions of feminine inferiority, thought the momentary silence a favourable opportunity for a disclaimer. 'I want you quite to understand,' he said, addressing Madeline and Professor Wray, who sat directly opposite to him, 'that my reasons for not

going with you entirely upon the subject of mixed or advanced education, arise not from contempt or indifference but from the utmost respect and admiration; the fear, in fact, that any change must be for the worse. For instance, a woman's perceptive faculties, her instinctive knowledge on an emergency of what to do at once, are far in advance of ours: the average man often does not see what is just before his eyes, or sees it without perceiving it; he turns a question over and over in his mind, examining it first on this side then on that, until an opportunity which a woman by some marvellous instinct would have seized at once, is gone. Now is it not possible that by developing a woman's reasoning faculties by the study of abstract science, you run the risk of weakening her peculiar and instinctive characteristics which are no less valuable?'

'I always observe,' said Madeline, 'that when, either in women or in any of the so-called lower animals, men recognise any kind of intelligence which they cannot understand, they call it "instinct"; but what this "instinct" is, no one seems exactly able to define, except that it is bestowed by nature as a sort of compensation for the lack of certain reasoning faculties assumed to be the peculiar property of one-half of the human race.'

'And supposing it to be true,' said the Professor, 'that there is, as the wise books of the East assert, an inward illumination implanted in the nature of a woman, I do not see what reason we have to fear that culture will eliminate it.'

'On such a theory as that,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'where are you to stop, you might even go so far as to deny girls the most rudimentary knowledge, on the plea of not interfering with this supposed inspiration; really, with all its plausibleness, I do not see that any one who refuses to develop a girl's reasoning powers for fear of injuring her perceptive faculties is more liberal-minded than the Oriental, who dictates that daughters shall be made emulous of acquiring the virtues of their sex, but must be altogether forbidden to read and write; does it compensate for the denial of education, with all its advantage, to be

told that "every book of knowledge is implanted in the heart of a woman," and to be paid compliments upon their marvellous intuition.'

'We must be thankful that the barriers of tradition and ignorance are fast breaking down,' said Mr. Silverton; 'we are growing out of the holy horror of anything unusual which once actuated parents and teachers alike. Before many years have passed I expect and hope that the majority of our countrywomen will have, in common with their brothers, all the benefit of a cheap and thorough education which endowment gives. It is for women who, like you and Miss Acton, have had exceptional advantages, which only a comparatively few can now obtain, to influence public opinion on these matters; it cannot be very hard, since the tide has turned and is setting strongly in your favour.'

'It is not so very long ago, though,' said his wife, 'since an article appeared in the *Globe* asserting that there were points beyond which the female intellect absolutely refused to go, in proof of which it was said that some women-students never could get beyond the Rule of Three!'

'In the same way,' replied Mr. Silverton, 'it was said that mathematics were beyond the range of the feminine intellect, and yet, as you know, it is in this line more than any other that during the last few years women have distinguished themselves; witness Professor Clifford's testimony to Miss Ellen Watson. Never fear; we are making progress here, and very rapid progress; the tone of the daily papers alone is sufficient to show this. It is only a very few years ago, you say, since the article you have just referred to appeared, and now it is scarcely commented on as remarkable, that a woman should take a first-class in mathematics, still less that Latin and Greek should form part of a regular course at a high school, and gymnastics and cricket have thrown into the background curtseys and calisthenics.'

'Turning for a moment from the question of particular to that of general education,' said Madeline, 'you will scarcely

believe me, perhaps, but on one occasion when my father, who was an enthusiast on the subject of education, asked a seemingly intelligent mechanic why he opposed the Act which brought it within reach of the poorest, his answer was, "I go agin it on principle, sir, not because of its onconstitutionality, but because it's onnat'ral. Ign'rance is nat'ral," he said, "we was born ign'rant and ought to be kep' so."'

'A survival of the same spirit,' said Professor Wray, 'which, on the first introduction of forks into Germany, made some uncleanly saints preach against them as an insult to Providence which had provided us with fingers. Truly nothing dies so hard as bigotry and prejudice. But you could tell me something of this from your experience on the School Board, I expect.'

'Yes,' said Madeline, 'but I was thinking, as Mr. Silverton spoke just now, that we have more to be thankful for than disheartened about, when we think how times have changed since Françoise de Saintonges, in the sixteenth century, I think, because she wished to establish a public girl's school in France was hooted through the streets of Paris, while four learned doctors were consulted by her father to assure himself as to whether her idea was not a temptation of the evil one. And I do not think any one now-a-days writing a pamphlet like one I have seen in the British Museum, entitled, *A plea for a Lawe Prohibiting the Alphabet to Women*, would find even one disciple, or receive anything but ridicule.'

'It certainly is extraordinary,' said Sir Henry, 'when one thinks of the lengths to which ignorance and prejudice were carried in former days; why even Fénélon taught, if I recollect aright, that true modesty was almost as incompatible with learning in a woman as vice; reading, writing, a little grammar, and the first four rules of arithmetic, were, I believe, his limit, while it was safer for them to know nothing than too much, just as if sweetness and silliness were synonymous.'

'Take care, Harry,' said his sister, laughing, 'I shall have to caution you, as the police do their prisoners, that whatever they say will be used in evidence against them. One argument

I heard just now sounded very much as if the speaker thought "sweetness and silliness synonymous," that, in fact, as the Chinese proverb says, "The glory of a man is knowledge, but the glory of a woman to renounce all knowledge."'

'Thanks, Mrs. Silverton, but I refuse emphatically to wear the cap you are generous enough to offer me; I think nothing more charming, as you know very well, than a refined highly-educated woman, that is a very different thing to wishing them trained to masculine pursuits.'

'Unfortunately,' said Madeline, 'no two persons hold precisely similar ideas as to what course of study may be considered distinctively feminine.'

'Our old friend of this morning, for instance, Madeline,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'has some curious suggestions to make upon this subject.'

'Who is that?' asked her brother.

'Only an ancient book which we found in the library this morning, and which contains in remarkable phraseology a guide to what was considered a liberal education for women a hundred years or more ago. I will find it by the time you rejoin us,' she continued, rising from the table, 'it will amuse you; meantime you and Major Knagge may evolve, if so please you, a course of instruction which shall be liberal, progressive, and enlightened, and yet offer no prejudices, and upset no existing institutions. I do not envy you.'

CHAPTER IV.

'The Scythians put out the eyes of their slaves that they might have no distraction in their work of beating butter. There are also people who destroy the sight of a nightingale that it may sing the better. Really one is almost tempted to think that a similar spirit ruled such education as has been given to women.' Daniel Stern.

'On veut que les femmes ne soient pas coupables d'études comme si leur âme était d'une autre espèce que celle des hommes, comme si elles n'avaient pas, aussi bien que nous, une raison à conduire, une volonté à régler, des passions à combattre, ou s'il leur était plus facile qu'à nous de satisfaire à tous ces devoirs sans rien apprendre.'

Fleury, *Traité du Choix des Etudes*, *p.* 265.

'People do not require from the oak that it should be like a birch, nor from the lily that it should resemble the creeping cestus. With men it is the same; they are allowed to each grow according to his bent and nature, and to become that which the Creator has called them to be . . . but women must be cast in one mould, and follow one line which is chalked out for them as if they had no souls of their own to show them the way and to give them an individual bent.' Frederika Bremer, *Hertha*.

'A woman that would neglect her family for her studies would equally neglect them for frivolous pursuits and dissipation. . . . . Hitherto usefulness and duty to men have been thought the only objects worth caring for with regard to women; it would at least be generous to take the individual happiness of the sex into consideration.'—Mrs. Somerville, *Letters quoted in* '*Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*,' *Essay V.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN.—*Continued.*

'I caught a few words of your conversation as I entered the room,' said Sir Henry, when some twenty minutes later he joined his sister and her friend who were seated *tête-à-tête* upon a lounge in a corner of the drawing-room, 'is it allowable for one who is neither a child nor a genius to possess the organ of inquisitiveness? I must confess I am curious to know which of our social institutions Miss Acton looks upon as a survival of barbarism.'

'The subject of our conversation was not very wise, dear Harry,' said Mrs. Silverton, her eyes as usual sparkling with fun, 'we talked principally of you and Fred, and men in general, I think.'

'That is too bad,' said Madeline, smiling, 'for we are, as a rule, quite as much, if not more, the slaves of custom than men; we were remarking, I think, in particular,' she added, turning to Sir Henry, 'upon the tenacity with which people cling to habits that once perhaps may have been expedient, but which have long ceased to have any *raison d'être*.'

'*A propos* of——'

'Of men sitting so long over their wine, I think; of all those who regularly follow the custom I fancy there are very few who remember its disreputable origin.'

'For my part,' replied Sir Henry, 'it is a habit I should not be sorry to see done away with, or at least reduced to such moderate measure as reigns in this establishment. In a speech of Daniel O'Connell's, he says that the reason ladies were admitted to the Irish Parliament was originally that it was no

uncommon thing for members to make their appearance drunk, and it was thought, as the result proved, that the presence of ladies must put an end to such a disgraceful state of things. No doubt the presence of self-respecting women always exercises a salutary control over men, which our forefathers (who after dinner, I am afraid more often than not, made brutes of themselves) found no doubt irksome.'

'And naturally,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'they were glad to get rid of the restraint, both upon their drinking and the conversation which accompanied it; but I presume there are few men now-a-days who after dinner find it expedient to keep out of our sight, or whose favourite subject of conversation are so *risqué* that they find it a relief when the dining-room door has hidden the last petticoat from their sight.'

'*Tempora mutantur*, I cannot say you do us more than justice,' Sir Henry answered. 'Manners, as Miss Acton was saying, are very apt to be perpetuated without regard to the morals upon which they were founded. During the last century, for instance, it was customary in Russia, so I have been told, when a lady got drunk at the house of a friend, for her to return the following day to acknowledge with thanks the pleasure that had been afforded her, now I daresay if the truth were known, though I am sure the ladies now never indulge to excess, they keep up to this day some remnant of the etiquette connected with this obsolete custom.'

'Not a bad *tu quoque*, Harry,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'supposing we had been amusing ourselves by accusing your sex in particular of intemperance—he has not quite got over the idea, Madeline, that we have a contempt for men in general, and lose no opportunity of finding weak joints in their armour—but to show how much you are mistaken, sir, though it is more than you deserve,' she continued, addressing her brother, 'I will indulge your curiosity and acknowledge that so far from throwing stones at you we had been, on the contrary, congratulating ourselves upon having four such representative men with whom to discuss the subjects upon which you consent to be

enlightened, and which, joking apart, I am very anxious you should know something about. There is Professor Wray, always in the forefront of the battle against ignorance and prejudice; there is Fred, like the dear old Liberal-conservative that he is, following at a humble distance; then immeasurably behind him,' she added, with an affectionate and admiring glance that belied her words, 'comes the future Member for Tregarthen, who though he calls himself a Liberal, still clings to the traditions of the past in a manner, that if he has not by that time lost the habit, will I hope some day make him blush; and lastly, Major Knagge who, if he had ever heard of De Maistre, would I am sure have highly approved of the educational theories of that illustrious Frenchman, who rules that in whatever line women try to emulate men, they can be no better than monkeys, poor imitations; that science is for them a dangerous pursuit, and any attempt on their part to understand the simplest branch of it, will only make them ridiculous and unhappy. Painting in oils, too, I believe, he considered unbefitting the "female sex," as he call us, though "a modest and occasional use of the pencil might be permitted."'

'These prejudices of the past are really very ridiculous,' replied her brother; 'but how you must have studied the subject, my dear, and Miss Acton, too; she seems to have read every book ever published, and every word ever written about the education or non-education of her sex.'

'The study is not a dull one, for denseness is amusing, don't you think so?' she replied; 'but if the prejudices of the past, when not irritating, are entertaining, I think quite as much may be said for those of the present day. I expect, though, to return to the diversity of opinion that exists amongst you, that you kept the ball rolling after our well-ordered retreat.'

'It grieves me to have to acknowledge, my dear, that we did not do anything of the sort, that, in fact, on your departure we actually let it drop. I suppose the truth was,' continued Sir Henry, addressing his sister, but with his glance wandering in

the direction of her friend, who had just risen and now stood at a little distance talking to Mr. Silverton, her delicate features, her well-poised head and graceful figure, in its soft clinging drapery of pale blue, thrown into strong relief by the tapestry curtains behind her, 'it would have been as dry, stale, and unprofitable as the play of Beauty and the Beast, with Beauty's part obliterated.'

'Neatly turned, though a plagiarism; but without compliment, confess the truth, you were heartily tired of the whole subject?'

'Not by any means; you must know very well that I was more than half-joking this morning in my professed contempt for these women's questions, they are coming to the front so much now, that with the dread possibility of being questioned thereupon by my constituents, I am not indifferent to, or ungrateful for, the chance of forming some definite opinions upon them, which I can scarcely be said to have done at present.'

Mrs. Silverton with all her openness was a discreet little woman, so she listened demurely to such explanation as her brother had to offer for his change of attitude, and made neither by look nor word the slightest allusion to his evident admiration for the beautiful girl whom he had been on the point of running away from but yesterday. 'Then you mean to encourage us so long as it may be profitable to do so,' she laughed, looking up at him; 'it reminds me of the old woman in Durham, who took a keen interest in the project of throwing open the University to women, and was quite pathetic in her anxiety that the ladies should have a suitable building appropriated to their use: by-and-by it transpired that she had been calculating upon obtaining the office of bed-maker. Is not your interest of somewhat the same type?'

'A little more disinterested I hope, as you shall find, if you can make good your claims; but I thought you had something to read to me.'

'Yes. Oh, I see Madeline is just showing it to Professor Wray; it is a curious old tract we found in the library, written

early in the last century by a gentleman who evidently considers his notions upon women's education very liberal. Come and look at it.'

'There is the pamphlet we were speaking of,' said Miss Acton, handing it to him as he approached. 'Please mark the capital letters and the author's lofty tone: "The more contracted and unemployed the deliberating and directing Power of the Mind is, the more liable is the elective to unworthy Pursuits and discommendable Options."'

'That "discommendable Options" is very fine,' said Sir Henry.

'Yes, but this is the passage we referred to,' said his sister, turning over the pages; 'where he exhorts his lady readers to "adorn their Understanding with the Improvements of Learning"—"I mean," he qualifies "with such as are suitable to her Sex. This is a Matter vastly more worthy of her Attention than any external graces she can possibly put on. . . . . She will receive more Profit and solid Pleasure from reading Ingenious Authors than in wearing out the Morning in ranging in Order her Essences, Perfumes, Combs, Pomatums, Washes, Patches, &c., &c., or in placing the Trinkets of the toilet; all which make up no more than Contrivance in Folly and Confusion in order"—"however," he says, fearing to be thought too advanced for his contemporaries, "I do not recommend it as absolutely necessary for a young lady to trouble herself with French, Italian, Latin, or any other foreign language, because she can meet with sufficient amusement and instruction in her own."'

'Their notions of what constituted a liberal education were certainly in those days very limited,' said Sir Henry, returning the book to Miss Acton. 'But after all I suppose you must draw the line somewhere; the question is where?'

'That is what every one seems to be asking,' was the reply. 'Few sensible people now object to a certain amount of intellectual development; all they do is to quibble about the degree, which proves that we have made some advance since

our grandmother's days. I am afraid you do not believe in the improvement,' she said, on catching sight of the dubious, not to say distressed, expression of Miss Wynter's usually placid face.

'To tell the truth, my dear, I cannot help thinking the old ways were best; with all these changes one never knows how things will end. Fifty years ago, if women *did* spend half their time in needlework, they could, at any rate, sew decently, which very few girls do now-a-days.'

'I am quite willing to grant you, auntie,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that a knowledge of sewing is useful to girls, as it is, though, perhaps in a lesser degree, for boys too,' she added, with a decisive little nod, 'but you cannot compare this age of machinery, when as much work can be well and neatly done in a day as would formerly have occupied a week, with the times when everything had to be done by hand; you might as well quarrel with the women of fifty years ago for buying their stuffs and linen instead of spinning and weaving it all themselves.'

'True,' said the Professor; 'it is one of the conditions of human progress that as society becomes more complex and civilised, so the intellectual supersedes the mechanical, brain-work gains upon mere power of muscle. The same rule applies to women as to men; and perhaps few ideas have done so much to stunt the human race as the notion that the feminine mind should be enlarged only within certain prescribed limits, beyond which development becomes an evil. Of this I am very certain, that before any great evolution of a higher life may be expected, women must have nothing less than equal intellectual and moral freedom with men. Every faculty bestowed by nature is given for use; how, then, can women fill the place nature intended them for unless allowed the fullest freedom, the most favourable conditions for the unfolding of all their powers? No other limit is justifiable save that set by individual capacity; and those who discourage learning in any individual or class are doing their best to destroy one of our

most powerful weapons in the war against vice, for by the spread of knowledge you let light and air into a close infected atmosphere, introducing at once a great element of health and well-being.'

'Whenever I find people in one way or another denying this,' said Madeline, 'it always makes me think of the old Jesuit priest who declared that as the limbs of children must be swaddled to give them just proportions and make them grow straight, so the human mind must also be swaddled if it is to remain happy and healthy. Every one has found out now that it is by exercise, and not restraint, that strength of body is developed; and yet, while we laugh at the Chinese for cramping their women's feet, there are some people, I am afraid, still amongst us who consider it a much less serious error to cramp their heads.'

'They have yet to learn,' said Professor Wray, 'that freedom is a necessary condition of all healthy, intellectual growth. "If you plant an oak," as Goethe says, "in a flower-pot, one of two things must happen, either the oak will be dwarfed or the flower-pot must break."'

'But some people prefer dwarfed plants,' said Sir Henry.

'That depends greatly,' said Madeline, 'upon the size of the dwelling which a man's own mind inhabits.'

'But, to follow out Goethe's metaphor, if dwarfed trees are not among the noblest of natural objects, you must allow, as an excuse for those who prefer them, that they are sometimes very pretty and attractive.'

'Yes, and if usefulness is not worth consideration, if a woman's vocation is to be simply ornamental, then the dwarfing system has some excuse, though many a fine nature has been spoilt by it, many a noble character, like the oak, too strong for its flower-pot, has broken the bonds of tradition, and sometimes, perhaps by the very force of reaction, been driven into extremes of self-assertion.'

'I suppose it is in this way,' said Mrs. Knagge, 'that you account for many of these advanced women being so very ob-

jectionable, so unconventional and ill-mannered, that, for my part, I do not wonder sensible people are prejudiced against the higher education one hears so much about.'

'Higher fiddlesticks,' said Major Knagge, in a subdued growl, audible only to his wife, who, true to her *rôle* of conjugal humility (in public), turned to him with a gentle smile, and,—

'You were about to remark, my love?'

'Oh, nothing particular; but it—er—appears to me that the word "higher" is applied to everything—er—*outré* now-a-days, and, with all due deference to the ladies present, who—er—differ from me, most sensible women, I think, recognise the folly of competing with men.'

Madeline evidently found Major Knagge quite irresistible with his pompous platitudes, hesitating search for suitable expressions, and unhesitating belief in himself.

'May I tell you a little story?' she asked, with eyes dancing, but with the meekest possible intonation. 'A few years ago, a girl applied for admission to one of the American Universities; her request was granted; but as a sort of reproof for her ambition, one of the sentences given her to translate from the Greek was this, from *Antigone*: "Seeing, then, that we are women, ought we not to be modest, and not try to compete with men?" Having taken the highest honours in Greek, finding herself, indeed, some way ahead of every man in the class, she could not resist the temptation to retaliate by introducing into her Greek composition the following: "Seeing, then, that we are men, ought we not to be ashamed that we have been vanquished by a woman?"'

'A very—er—good story, and very well told,' said the Major patronisingly, and with unmoved solemnity, though there was a general smile of amusement at the aptness of Madeline's reply. 'There are, doubtless, exceptional cases in which ladies have—er—distinguished themselves; but their achievements, I should say, are less—er—remarkable in themselves than as being the work of—er—the weaker sex, from

whom naturally we do not expect much beyond domestic and —er—social graces. This is where women make a mistake; instead of being contented with their—er—acknowledged pre-eminence in matters of taste and feeling, they—er—unwisely, allow me to suggest, attempt to rival us in intellectual pursuits, in which the only result must be—er—ultimately ignominious failure.' The major here drew his handkerchief across his brow, and looked around him with the air of having made use of arguments quite unanswerable. But resistance came from an unexpected quarter.

'We men,' said Sir Henry, 'knowing how feeble we are in many respects compared with a woman, would like to be thought to have a monopoly of brain-power; but I am afraid the competitive examinations of the last few years only prove what consummate coxcombs we must have been ever to have thought so. I have been feeling more humble than ever,' he added, turning to Professor Wray, 'ever since you showed me in black and white the results of some of these examinations.'

'It is no good disputing the fact,' said the Professor, in reply. 'I do not, of course, carry statistics about with me, but I know that when I was examining mixed classes for the B.A. degree at London University, forty-two per cent of the men only got their degree, while of the twenty-two women who presented themselves, seventy-three per cent were successful; of the men, twenty-seven per cent were placed in the first division; of the women, sixty-eight obtained this distinction, though their average age was, if anything, lower. In Professor Huxley's science classes again last year, the one woman who competed came out ahead of all the male students. Such facts speak for themselves.'

'But even supposing women to possess inferior abilities,' said Madeline, 'would Major Knagge think that a reason for allowing such gifts as they possess to be lost for want of cultivation? Is it not Ruskin who says that the most obvious duty which one owes to one's fellow-creatures is to ascertain

one's own special gifts and strengthen them to the utmost for the help of others?'

'Well, if girls want to help other people,' replied Major Knagge with some warmth, for he felt he was getting the worst of the argument, 'they will do this much better by keeping their own place and attending to their—er—peculiarly feminine duties. For instance: Mending their own and their fathers' and brothers' clothes, making puddings and pies, and attending to domestic matters generally instead of dabbling in things quite out of their reach.'

'Like the old writer in Puritan times,' said Sir Henry, 'you think that "she who knoweth how to compound a pudding is more desirable than she who skilfully compoundeth a poem;" that is rather a low view to take of woman's mission, I think.'

'And just imagine,' said Madeline, greatly amused, 'the position of a man with a mother and six sisters condemned to spend their energies exclusively on the occupations you recommend. To afford them sufficient employment his normal condition would have to be that of the hero in "The House that Jack built," "all tattered and torn," while it is dreadful to think of the amount of "puddings and pies" the poor man would be compelled to consume, he would have to adopt the motto once suggested to the British Association, "Courses may come, and courses go, but I eat on for ever."'

> '"We may live without friends, we may live without books,
> But where is the man who can live without cooks,"'

quoted Sir Henry, 'I confess, for my part, however, I should try to live without elaborate cookery if it depended on the labour of the ladies of my family; but perhaps I am no true Englishman, for Douglas Jerrold declares that our rational love of dining is so great that if the country were to be demolished by an earthquake, we should meet and manage to dine somewhere amongst the ruins, just to celebrate the event. You hit the Major harder than you intended,' he added, in an aside to

Madeline, as he stooped and picked up the ball of wool she had just dropped in taking her knitting from the table.

'How,' she asked, innocently?

'Well, you see, he is something of a gourmand, and like Athenæus, he holds that "to cookery we owe well-ordered States," so profane joking on such a solemn subject is really too much for his equanimity.'

'I am very sorry,' she replied; 'but really some arguments it is impossible to treat seriously.'

'I am afraid, Major Knagge,' the Professor was saying at the same moment, 'you are inclined to share a very common but, I think, mistaken belief that highly cultivated women are apt to neglect their household duties, but from conscientious women, that is to say from the majority, I think quite the contrary result is to be expected; for by training the mind to thoroughness you only increase their sense of responsibility, and desire to perform even the smallest duties well.'

'I can speak from experience,' said Mr. Silverton, with an affectionate glance at his wife, who was at this moment engaged in pouring out the tea, 'that a ladies' college is not necessarily a bad preparation for domestic life; the man who wants a mere housekeeper and not a friend and companion in his wife had better marry his cook at once, for if the husband's pursuits and pleasures are of an entirely different nature from those of the wife, it leads to separate interests and separate lives, and when they are together they have very few sympathies in common. So long as the woman, who is a man's constant companion, remains only half-developed, her influence must be injurious, retarding his mental growth, and inducing him to rest satisfied with much smaller things than he might have accomplished under the influence of a friendly rivalry and appreciative but discriminating encouragement. What do you say, Nellie?' he added, seeing that his wife, from whom he was taking the cups to hand to their guests, catching the drift of his last remark met his glance with one of her brightest smiles.

'I think,' she replied, 'that while you teach wives thoroughness, and try to bring their minds up to the highest mental and moral standard, you must not forget also to teach husbands not to hold themselves so entirely aloof, as some do from choice, in all matters of domestic responsibility, they have no right to refuse to take a share of their wives' anxieties on the plea that these things are no concern of theirs.'

'But, my dear!' said Sir Henry, 'you must not forget that there is nothing many women would resent more than the interference of a blundering male creature in their domestic affairs, like old Hannah, whom we used to laugh about at Tregarthen, who thought one day in the week was quite often enough to have a man about the house.'

'I remember,' replied his sister, smiling; 'but old Hannah's was, I hope, not a typical case. I have no doubt there *are* wives who like to keep their interests and occupations as much apart as possible from those of their husband, just as there are husbands who ignore the claims of wife and family beyond the point of providing for their maintenance. But what I assert is that in a true marriage there should be a constant interchange not only of sympathy but of counsel and helpfulness; a man should be ready always to put his shoulder, if need be, to the domestic wheel, and not, on the other hand, think that by hiding *his* particular worries he is doing what is best for either of them.'

'It is no doubt a pity,' said Professor Wray, 'that men of the working classes, using the term in its widest sense, from professional men downwards, see so little of their homes and are almost strangers to their children; but when motive power comes to be distributed with as much ease as gas and water, we may hope that many thousands of fathers, whose houses now are just sleeping places, no more, will be able to make their homes the centres of their activity.'

'A problematical blessing for the wives in many cases, I expect,' said Sir Henry; 'but I do not quite see what all this has to do with education.'

'I was just thinking,' said Major Knagge, whose ruffled feathers had by this time readjusted themselves, 'that jokes and wide-of-the-mark arguments will not—er—disprove my assertion that women who go in for learning will—must—er—inevitably neglect more important duties, think them in fact—er—beneath their notice.'

'I tried, though no doubt feebly, to say a word to the point just now,' said Professor Wray, 'and Mr. Silverton pointed the argument very aptly, so I thought; but to give you an example that just occurs to me of the practical and common-sense view of the every-day duties of life, taken by the most advanced supporters of the higher education of women, I was talking, not long ago, to a friend, who during his recent stay in America visited, amongst other places, Wellesley College, Massachusetts, which is not a girl's school, calling itself a college, but a women's University, where there is no branch of knowledge in which the students may not graduate, and yet the girls do all the work of the establishment with their own hands, it being thought well that all should understand and take a practical part in housekeeping and domestic economy; this does not look like shirking the humbler branches of what they consider quite as much as you do peculiarly a woman's work; the time these duties occupy, however, is but one hour each daily, which is not allowed to interfere with their studies. Another thing that struck me as a very wise arrangement is, that a resident lady-physician is employed not only for ordinary professional duties, but also to give all the students, whether intended for doctors or not, instruction in dietetics and the ordinary laws of health, a rule, which is, I believe, followed at many similar institutions.'

'My dear sir,' said the Major, if possible more unconvinced, more pompous and emphatic than before, 'this may be all very well for women who have no man to look after them, and who must, therefore—er—rely upon their own exertions, but do you think it is to such institutions, with their pedantic and cut-and-dried systems, that men will go for their wives? No, emphatically no!'

There was a rapid interchange of glances between Mrs. Silverton and her husband, and an amused smile hovered around her lips, which gradually gave place to an expression of delighted approval, as, turning to Major Knagge with a warmth of indignant protest unusual with him, her husband replied, 'So much the worse for them, that is all; a woman's mind was no more meant to be barren and unprofitable than a man's, it is only asses, so far as I know, who have a special and particular liking for thistles; only dull or empty-headed men are afraid of intelligent women, and I hope for the credit of our sex that these are in the minority.

'And for the sake of humanity too,' said the Professor. 'since it would be a bad look out if the mothers of our race were to be chosen exclusively from the silliest or most ignorant of their sex; so we will hope that it is only ignorant or vicious men who prefer empty-headed and frivolous wives, in whose indiscriminating devotion they are safe from criticism, and in comparison with whom they may still keep up an assumption of superiority, very soothing, no doubt, to their self-love.'

'It will be time enough for such men, I think,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'to use their preference as an argument against granting women facilities for acquiring any knowledge they may desire, when the supply of women as foolish as themselves is entirely cut off, and since, as Mrs. Poyser says, "God Almighty made them to match the men," that will be, I suspect, never. But what a serious expression, Madeline!'

'I was thinking,' was the reply, 'of how invariably, and to me provokingly, these discussions seem based upon the assumption that to please man is a woman's unique destiny; that her existence has no *raison d'être*, except so far as it ministers to, or influences him; that, in fact, if she knows how to love she knows enough. We shall never, I think, get an altogether satisfactory system of education until it is universally recognised that a girl should be trained with a view to her own present and future advantage, and to the interests of humanity

at large, not with a single view to the convenience of the opposite sex.'

There was an indignant protest in the very turn of her head, in the expression of lip and nostril, in the ring of the speaker's voice, sweet and low though it was, which seemed to move one of her hearers at least physically as well as mentally.

Sir Henry, as he came round and stood at the back of his sister's chair, thought, as he marked Madeline's heightened colour and sparkling eye, that such an advocate might easily convert a whole room full of heretics.

Madeline felt his gaze fixed upon her; but there was no room in her thoughts for self-consciousness, and she took his attention as a hopeful sign of interest, not in herself, but in her subject.

'You understand what I mean,' she said. 'Was it not you, Sir Henry, who were quoting Molière at dinner? You remember his *L'Ecole des Femmes*, perhaps?'

'Not much, I am afraid,' he replied, as he came and took a chair close to the couch on which Madeline and Professor Wray were sitting. 'I just recollect that there is a narrow-minded old *bourgeois*, who adopts a young girl and brings her up in some eccentric fashion.'

'Yes; and his is just the type of thought that I complain of; do you not recollect how he explains to a friend—

> "Je la fis élever selon ma politique
> C'est-à-dire ordonnant quels soins on emploierait
> Pour la rendre idiote autant qu'il se pourrait;"

and how by-and-by, on the eve of her marriage, poor girl, he makes a long speech, telling her that her sex was created for dependence, and that Providence having divinely ordained that power should be on the side of the beard, woman's first and primary duty was to be all submission, she must not, therefore, dare even to think, much less act, on her own responsibility.'

'I remember,' said Sir Henry, 'he was the sort of fellow over whom, if one met him in real life, one would long to direct

the hose of a fire-engine to take a little of the starch out of him. I need not say I am sure that I have no sympathy with such narrow-minded and selfish ideas; but at the same time, I ask it, in all humility, do you not think that abstruse study is apt, I do not say always, but sometimes, to make women hard and cold, less lovable and loving than they would otherwise have been?'

'It is possible,' replied Madeline slowly, as though weighing every word; 'I have not thought much about this view of the subject; but it is possible, perhaps probable, that amongst thoughtful and studious girls and women, you would not find many cases of that subversion of the judgment by emotion, that loving "not wisely but too well," which forms the stock-in-trade of a certain class of novelists.'

'But,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'if their hearts are not so lightly won, are they not better worth the winning? It is very good for men to feel, too, that they cannot have everything their own way; though, for my part, I do not believe that enlarging a girl's views and strengthening her nature has a hardening effect. There is all the difference in the force of a stream kept between banks and one allowed to flow hither and thither till it is practically lost.'

'Hypatia,' said the Professor, 'was not a worse daughter for all her erudition and extraordinary genius; the learned Italian women of the Renaissance, Isabella of Mantua, Caterina Cornaro, Caterina Sforza, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the guide and teacher of Lorenzo de Medici, Vittoria Colonna, the friend and inspirer of Michael Angelo, had, we know from the testimony of their contemporaries, nothing harsh or unfeminine about them; Olympia Morata, again, as Mr. Trollope remarks in his biography, supplies a further contradiction to the theories of those who object to learned women: "Did her learning," he asks, "make her a less loving or even a less housewifely wife? Did her competency to correspond with the greatest scholars of Europe render her less capable of gaining the affection of her friends? Her Homeric studies did not keep her from visiting

the poor in the plague-stricken houses of Schweinfurth, or detain her from her solitary watch by her sick husband's bedside." Laura Bassi, though in learning she excelled most of her contemporaries, was no less noted as a good manager and a devoted wife and mother, she had no less than twelve children, but her marriage, so wrote Fantuzzi, only added another charm to her womanhood without destroying her individuality or interfering with her scientific studies.'

'Many of the Italians of the Renaissance,' said Mr. Silverton, 'were, I think, in advance of many of their descendants in recognising that the fullest freedom and widest cultivation are the most favourable conditions for the development of the noblest and purest humanity, whether in man or woman.'

'Strangely enough, though,' said Professor Wray, 'in those days a learned woman was called a "virago," not, however, as a term of reproach, but as one of honour and respect, in which sense it is used by Jacob von Bergams in his work on celebrated women. It is, therefore, quite a mistake to suppose, as some have done, that the term has any connexion with such modern nicknames as "blue stocking," "female pedant," the "shrieking sisterhood," and other epithets, which pass for wit amongst a certain class of writers and their equally shallow readers.'

'That is very curious,' said Sir Henry. 'I had no idea that the word "virago" had so completely changed its meaning. But to return to our argument: after all, it is with the women of our own day that we have to do; those Italian ladies may have been quite exceptional in their acquirements, and, anyway, one must allow something for the exaggeration and love of eulogy which always animates the pen of a biographer, be he ever so anxious to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."'

'You will not yield your ground until there is not an inch left to stand upon, I see,' said the Professor. 'It would be easy to give you any number of recent examples of women who, while eminent for learning, have been no less admirable in all their domestic relations. Mary Somerville as a wife, Caroline

Herschell as a sister, Harriet Martineau as a daughter, Madame de Sevigné as a devoted mother; there is no idea more prevalent and more false I am convinced than this, that true tenderness of feeling and domestic tastes are incompatible with a strong, well-regulated, and highly-cultivated mind: indeed, my experience has generally been that it is those people who know and think the least who are most headstrong and opinionated, most thoughtless and frivolous.'

'I am not going to let you have everything your own way,' said Sir Henry, smiling; 'there is something to be urged on the other side. I know of a case, for instance, in which an eminent literary man found so little of a helpmate in his almost equally clever wife, that after a year or two of marriage they were compelled to part; and one of her best *bon mots* shows how much of wifely affection or even interest she possessed, for when asked on one occasion if she had read her husband's last work, she replied, "No, I renounced the devil and all his works a long time ago."'

'And you think,' said his sister, 'that if she had been a dull or ignorant woman they would have had a greater chance of happiness? We are not arguing that all intellectual women are, as a matter of course, perfect, only that culture has no tendency *per se* to unfit women for the duties of everyday life, but rather the contrary, cultivation only raises, does not change the nature. "A mother's love for offspring," as Sydney Smith says, "hardly depends on her ignorance of Greek, nor is she likely to neglect an infant for a quadratic equation."'

'But even,' said Miss Wynter, who had for the last few minutes been listening attentively, 'supposing these new ideas about education to have all the advantages you claim, I know a great many doctors say they have most injurious effects upon a girl's constitution. I was reading an article not long ago—I don't quite recollect where—in which it was shown that women could not bear the strain involved in the close study of abstruse subjects.'

'I have never found doctors more free from prejudices than

other people,' said Madeline, 'hence, perhaps, the cry about mental strain being bad for girls; and, really, I think until they have as much movement and outdoor recreation as boys, it is impossible to judge whether or not they can stand the same amount of intellectual exertion, for the theory that they are not strong enough to bear the air and light answers about equally well for women as for plants—the less they have of these the more pale and sickly will be their mental and physical condition.'

'I only know,' replied Miss Wynter, 'that there were many cases given in this article proving that the over-taxing of the brain in some of our high-schools and colleges was having the most evil effects upon the health of our young women.'

'I never yet heard, auntie,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that to overtax the brain was good for any one, man or woman, boy or girl; but because the health of a few men at college gives way under high pressure, no one thinks of seriously arguing that study beyond a certain given point is bad for all men, and that further instruction upon the subjects in which a few have failed is no longer to be allowed at our Universities, and yet that is very much the sort of argument applied to women.'

'For my part,' said Mr. Silverton, 'I think that the very general success of the higher local examinations has proved that the majority of women have no less than men the power of earnest work, and are able to bear at least equally the strain of competition. I cannot think it is just that artificial barriers should be set up on no better basis than theories, which are still matters of controversy.'

'There can be no question,' said Professor Wray, 'that, looked at from any point of view, it is unwise to interfere with the natural processes by which capacity is tested and incapacity exposed. More than this: there is a want of true manhood in saying to women, "Before we yield you anything you must prove your capacity," while at the same time we place all kinds of difficulties in their way. With women as with men, in the intellectual as in the physical contest, the survival of the fittest

is the law of nature, and the weaker must sooner or later inevitably go to the wall without any help from existing prejudices as to assumed incapacity. The only thing to be guarded against is the undue forcing of young girls under seventeen into severe intellectual exertions, while the body is growing and before the brain is fully developed, especially if at the same time, as Miss Acton remarked, they are not given every opportunity to indulge in such active sports and exercise as their brothers all enjoy.'

'I think the age to which many of the most distinguished literary women have lived,' said Madeline, 'shows that in their case, as in that of men, it is not so much hard intellectual work, as injudicious or unsuccessful work which injures; and how much of a woman's work under present conditions must be unsuccessful? A boy's education always tends towards some definite end, he has honours set before him, money in the shape of exhibitions and scholarships, and finally the chance of proving the power of knowledge in some definite career; much as things have improved, how few of all these encouragements fall to the lot of the most gifted woman?'

'But surely,' said Sir Henry, 'the earnest student ought to find his or her work its own reward.'

'Perhaps so; but still it wants, I think, an exceptionally strong love of any particular branch of learning to pursue it solely for its own sake without any ulterior aims. Take, for instance, two average schoolboys, and set them to construe, say, a play of Œdipus, promising to the one, by way of reward, a pony, a handsome writing-desk, a cabinet for curiosities, or whatever he may have a fancy for; while to the other you say, "I give you a much higher motive, your labour must be its own reward, when you have completed your task, I will allow you to keep the exercise-book in which it is written, with my annotations and notes of approval where they are deserved." Would you call that fair, and could you be surprised if the second boy felt the injustice and was disheartened?'

'I quite see your point,' said Sir Henry, 'and women have,

no doubt, in the past suffered great injustice in the matter of education; but you must allow that things are mending, and that there is a very general desire now to give them a fair chance.'

'We are constantly told of all that is being done for women in the way of education,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'while what is left undone gets quietly ignored, and yet Madeline's parable of the two boys applies to the present almost as much as to the past; just think how very few and far between are the encouragements to learning set before women compared with the prizes to be earned by men possessing neither more ability nor more industry; the only wonder, I think, is that so large a number still go on steadily doing their best without being either discouraged or indifferent, though they are very much in the position of workmen who are expected to be overcome with gratitude for the present of a set of tools, while, at the same time, their hands are carefully tied so that if they use them at all it can only be in a very limited fashion.'

'There is a story,' said Madeline, 'told of a girl who was such a celebrated climber that she would have been made a member of an Alpine Club had it not been for the misfortune of sex; however, by way of consolation, they elected the dog who had accompanied her on all her expeditions—you think the story very ridiculous, no doubt,' she added, in reply to Sir Henry's look of amusement, 'but I do not think it gives at all a bad idea of the indirect sort of recognition which is all the cleverest and most zealous women-students can hope to receive at our chief Universities.'

'But their names appear in the class-lists, do they not? while London gives them the hall-mark of a degree, and Oxford and Cambridge a certificate of having passed their examinations.'

'True, but after? As regards any future career, except in one direction, the woman who has herself or others to support is very much in the position of the workman to whom Nellie referred, with his fine tools and hands tied so that he

cannot use them. How many doors to a future competence will she, in spite of her education, find ready to open at her knock?'

'I cannot, for the life of me, see what women want more than they have got,' said Major Knagge, looking up from the pages of the *Field* in which, and the depths of a large easy-chair, he had been buried for the last quarter of an hour; 'many a poor subaltern spending—er—his life's blood in his country's service would be thankful for a fourth of the income earned by the mistresses in girls' high-schools, what with their comfortable house, their fixed salary, their capitation-fees, and —er—I don't know what else.'

'You cannot, I think,' said Professor Wray, 'compare the responsibilities of the one, the brains, the organizing power required in the one case with those demanded in the other; I take it that intellectual wealth is the primary source of a country's prosperity, and that, therefore, these women performing the higher service deserve the better pay.'

'I am prepared to grant that,' said Sir Henry, 'but is not their position in itself a refutation of your argument that girl-students have no incentive to work?'

'And how many of the thousands of girls being educated at our high-schools and colleges can hope to attain such a position? These prizes are few and far between, and not so very brilliant after all, when you compare them with the salary and position not of a subaltern but of a Major-General (for the women you refer to, recollect, are at the summit of their profession), or with the head master of a public school, who not only has a much higher salary and position, but has also the happy consciousness that if he does not openly transgress the decalogue, as interpreted by modern ideas, he may almost with certainty count sooner or later upon a bishopric. But putting aside for the moment the question of the employment of women, what we are maintaining is that as yet they are far from having their fair share of the educational endowments of the country. The money available for the encouragement of

learning in girls, is, I believe, something under 5000*l.* per annum, whereas the endowment of boys' schools reaches over 277,000*l.*, nearly sixty times as much, to say nothing of the funds of our Universities applied almost exclusively to the advantage of men. Oxford owes its chief wealth to the spoil of nunneries, and yet, though it is now tardily proposing to admit women to some examinations, no sense of justice prompts adequate provision for their higher education. When girls and women are admitted as freely in every respect to all endowments as men, then, and not till then, will they cease to have any right to complain of injustice.'

'Look for example at Christ's Hospital,' said Madeline; 'founded originally for boys and girls, it educates 1100 of the former in a manner that will enable them to take a good position in society; while a few, a very few, girls are trained, and that, so I understand, for domestic service. It seems almost incredible, but when Mill first brought forward the question of Woman's Suffrage in the House of Commons there was no provision whatever for the higher education of girls, and yet the opposition to any change was, at least, as strong as it is now; indeed, many reputedly intelligent men went so far as to say that the brain-power of girls being so very far inferior, to admit them to the same examinations would at once lower their *prestige*. I never could quite follow their line of reasoning, I suppose it was too involved for my limited apprehension.

'To tell the truth,' said Sir Henry, 'looking at the results of recent examinations, there is more reason, I think, to fear that we shall be humiliated by being left far behind in the race, and shall have to begin with shame to take a lower place in creation than we have hitherto supposed ourselves to be entitled to.'

'Some such fear was expressed by no less a person than Titus Livius,' said Professor Wray, 'and has been echoed occasionally ever since, but it is a very unworthy one.'

'So I think,' said Madeline, 'if, as soon as women have fair play, men are to be more or less effaced, then they must be

very much feebler creatures than we have been always led to suppose.'

'I wish people would understand,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that the education of women is a question of general not of class benefit; supposing a woman in any particular case to be her husband's superior in culture and natural endowments, it must be for their joint benefit that she is in a position to supply his intellectual deficiencies. I must say it is very difficult to imagine any worthy motive actuating those men who still desire to keep women mentally in leading-strings.'

'I do not see that,' said Sir Henry, 'I believe a great many of these wicked tyrants are actuated by a true reverence for womanhood, they would spare women all they can, taking the toil of advancing knowledge on their own shoulders, feeling as they do that the enjoyment of things should be a woman's part in life.'

'What an abnormal development of ideality, and what ignorance of the real issues of life such men must possess!' replied Mrs. Silverton. 'But "against stupidity the gods themselves are powerless," and people who will persist in looking through the wrong end of a telescope in spite of remonstrance, are only to be given up as hopeless, I suppose; but just fancy any one in this nineteenth century taking it as a matter of course that all women are happy, sheltered, and protected, and, therefore, do not, like men, require to be prepared for the battle of life.'

'It is, of course, taken for granted,' said Major Knagge, 'that women will find this protection in their natural sphere, that they will—er—marry and be supported by their husbands.'

'But,' said the Professor, 'do you think anything but immemorial custom could make it seem decent or fitting that women should depend upon marriage for a maintenance, the only alternative to which is destitution and misery? Every day well-born and delicately nurtured women are thrown upon their own resources, perhaps with others dependent on them,

and it is both cruel and selfish to ignore this fact and refuse to the rising generation a training which shall make them capable and self-supporting, and enable them to command some employment suitable to their station in life. Nothing can touch the money invested here. I do not ignore the difficulties in the way of women's work, but these will lessen as time goes on, and we can, at least, save those who are still young from drifting into the miserable condition of pauperism and dependence into which so many elderly gentlewomen among us have been forced, chiefly by their defective training.'

'But,' asked Sir Henry, 'has not the case of such women been somewhat overstated by the lovers of sensational charity?'

'That,' said Madeline, 'would be impossible; if it were not so late, I would read you some extracts from the reports of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, which would show you how very wide and pressing is the want of a training which shall put women of the educated classes in a position of pecuniary independence.'

'But the question of "women's work,"' said Mrs. Silverton, 'is so wide and would take us so very far afield, that if we allow ourselves to start upon it, we shall be like the little old woman in the nursery-tale with her refractory pig, "and shan't get home to-night," and, therefore, with the consent of the honourable members present, I move that the debate be adjourned.'

CHAPTER V.

'The only argument entitled to any weight against the fullest concession of a woman's right to choose her own sphere of activity and usefulness and to evolve its proper limitations, rests on the assumption that woman does not claim any such rights. If she sees fit to navigate vessels, print newspapers, frame laws, and select rulers—any or all of these—I know no principle that justifies men in interposing any impediment to her doing so.' HORACE GREELEY, *Letter to the Ohio Convention.*

'When women are called upon to assume the burdens of men, and to undertake the responsibility of providing for their own subsistence, they approach the task under greater difficulties than belong to their more powerful competitors. Now, Sir, I cannot help thinking that for some reason or other there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under existing social arrangements. It is to me a matter of astonishment to observe in London the distribution of employment as between men and women. I scarcely ever see in the hands of women an employment that ought more naturally to be in the hands of men; but I constantly see in the hands of men employment which might be more beneficially and economically in the hands of women.'

MR. GLADSTONE'S *Speech in the House of Commons, May 3rd*, 1871.

'The honest, earnest man must stand and work,
The woman also, otherwise she drops
At once below the dignity of man
Accepting serfdom. Free men freely work.'

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh.*

'The earnestness of life is the only passport to the satisfaction of life.'

THEODORE PARKER.

CHAPTER V.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

Though still almost oppressively hot in the middle of the day, there was an autumnal chilliness in the morning air which made Madeline, who had gone out for a constitutional directly after an early breakfast, walk across the downs with something more than her usual briskness, to the great delight of Neptune, who had already promoted her to such a high place in his esteem, that contrary to his usual custom he forgot in her society to keep up any resentment at not having been allowed to join his master and the shooting-party. Like most well-bred animals he delighted in being talked to, and always showed his appreciation of the attention in a manner quite unmistakable; so it was a matter of no small astonishment to Madeline that suddenly, while she was speaking to him, he sniffed the air for a second, gave a low whine, and throwing politeness to the winds, bounded suddenly over a hedge into one of the fields which skirted the common, and presently disappeared down a small ravine on the opposite side of the enclosure. Curious to find out what was the cause of this unwonted excitement, Madeline followed at a more moderate pace, but before she reached the edge of the slope Neptune had re-appeared, barking, and now ran before her looking back every moment to see if she was following. After making her way, not without difficulty, through the gorse and bracken which just at that point lined the sides of the ravine, she reached a small grass-grown spot, where seated on a stone beside the brook that here made its way somewhat noisily to the sea, she recognised to her astonishment Sir Henry Tregarthen, whom an hour ago she had seen in the highest

spirits starting for a good day's shooting, but who now looked the very picture of misery and discomfort.'

'Please do not move,' she exclaimed, as with a woe-begone smile by way of greeting he attempted to rise on her approach: 'I hope nothing serious has happened?'

'Only a piece of my confounded ill-luck, I beg your pardon, but I am afraid before you arrived I had lost, not only my day's sport, but my temper. The fact is, soon after we started I was clever enough to strain my ankle in scrambling through a hedge, and finding that walking made it get worse and worse instead of better, I was obliged at last to turn back; I thought I could manage to get to Crag's Nest without alarming Nellie by sending for the carriage, but by the time I reached this stream my foot had become so swollen that I slit my boot up with my pocket-knife and tried what wading through the cold water would do for me, and this cut is the result. A sharp stone, I suppose.—But I cannot bear to keep you standing,' he added, with a sense of humour that no discomfort could entirely repress, 'if I could only in natural gifts emulate that superior animal the stork, I would offer you my seat and stand at ease for an indefinite period upon one point of support, but as it is——'

Madeline did not smile in reply; a softened and almost tender expression, so her companion thought, came into her eyes as she drew nearer and saw the real state of the case, for his foot was bleeding in a way to alarm a novice in the art of surgery; but Madeline had not spent six months in a London hospital for nothing. 'Will you let me examine it?' she asked, with just a shade of timidity mingling with her natural impulse to relieve suffering wherever it might be found.

With most of the young women of his acquaintance, Sir Henry would possibly have made some polite protestations, 'So sorry to trouble them;' Ashamed to let a lady wait upon him,' &c., but Madeline's manner, as taking off her gloves she knelt down, and without saying another word began to bathe his foot, was, though gentle and womanly, at the same time so practical and

business-like, that he felt complimentary platitudes would be quite out of place. 'Now, can you manage to hold it in the running water while I make a bandage? If you will give me your handkerchief, I think with mine it will be long enough,' and so saying she took needle, cotton, and thimble from a housewife in her pocket, and tearing the cambric into strips began to sew them together.'

'You are evidently not one of those persons who are born with two left hands,' said Sir Henry, who was watching her with a mingled feeling of gratitude and admiration, as she deftly and firmly wound the bandage around the strained ankle and wounded instep, 'my foot feels better already.'

'I am glad of that, and I do not think the strain is very serious, though it may entail a few days' rest. But the question is, after your foot is bound up, how are you to reach home? Only a phantom coach and horses could get down this ravine.'

'Now do not, please do not recommend two men and a stretcher,' pleaded Sir Henry.

'I wonder,' said Madeline, meditatively, 'if with my help you could manage to walk; it cannot be more than five minutes from the lower part of the grounds, and you could rest again on a garden-seat before going up to the house.'

'I am sure I could manage it, but—well, in the first place, I hate to give you all this trouble, and in the second, I shall never get on that boot again.'

'True, I had forgotten your boot; I think you will have after all to let me go to the house to see what Nellie can find in the way of an easy shoe, only you ought to be at home and resting your foot as soon as possible.'

'Oh, thanks; but I really think there is nothing serious the matter, I feel so much better now, owing to your good offices, that I can easily limp such a short distance, only my boot—wait, I have thought of a plan. Here, Neptune, good dog, slipper,' he exclaimed, pointing to the discarded boot. 'I think he will understand,' he continued, turning to Madeline, 'for he

has been in the habit of taking my boots and bringing my slippers from one part of the house to the other;' and true enough, the retriever, after looking for a moment questioningly in his master's face and then at the boot, seized the latter and trotted off without any further hesitation in the direction of Crag's Nest.

'You are very fortunate to have such a dog,' said Madeline presently, with some enthusiasm.

'I certainly was mistaken when I said in my haste this morning that I was an unlucky fellow,' but the look with which these words were accompanied were lost upon his companion, who had stooped down and was again examining the injured foot.

'That cut has not stopped bleeding, I am afraid,' she said; 'I shall have to alter the arrangement of the bandage and draw it tighter I think; there, that is better, does it hurt you?'

'Hurt me, yes—no, not my foot. You believe in cold water, Miss Acton?'

'Yes, in most cases, it is at any rate a safe remedy.'

'Are there no occasions when warmth would be better for a patient?'

'Certainly, though not, I think, in the present instance; but that is surely Neptune coming back already, and with the slipper too. Oh, you good dog! You ought to have the medal of the Royal Humane Society.' Madeline talked fast, unusually fast for her; but Sir Henry was for the moment silent, and for some reason as nearly sulky as his happily constituted nature would allow. Rising slowly he made one or two ineffectual efforts to get on alone, but was fain at last to accept his companion's frankly proffered arm.

'It does seem reversing our positions, though,' he said, with a half-apology, 'I ought to be helping *you* along this rough road.'

'If I had hurt my foot I am sure you would.'

'A thousand times yes; but under any circumstances it always seems a lady's right to claim, and a man's privilege to give her help.'

'In our artificial state of society, yes; but nature never

intended a woman to be helpless, it ought not to be more difficult for her to get about than a man; it is only custom, an irrational dress, and defective physical training that have made it so. I hope the day will come when health, comfort, and fitness, rather than fashion, will have the ordering of our clothing. Men have the advantage over us in this respect.'

'But I am sure you would not advocate dressing like a man.'

'Certainly not; here we should fail at once in fulfilling the condition of fitness; besides, I do not think that your dress, though in some sense convenient, is altogether rational, and it certainly has contrived in many respects to reach the acme of ugliness; it has, however, this advantage over ours, you are not greatly hindered by it in the active business of life. But I see your foot is paining you, I am glad we have reached the shrubbery at last, will you not rest here on this seat while I go on to the house and find Nellie?'

Sir Henry was not sorry to accept the invitation, nor, contrary to her expectations, did his sister have much difficulty in persuading him to rest in his own room for an hour, thanks to which, perhaps, by luncheon-time he seemed in general health and spirits, none the worse for his morning's accident, and from a couch near the dining-room window was ready, in the intervals of a very excellent meal, for a passage-at-arms with any one who chose to enter the lists. 'Miss Acton has been giving me some new ideas, Nellie,' he said, 'on the subject of ladies' dress, and I have been wondering if, as usual, you agree with her, why you do not from that seat of genius, your inner consciousness, evolve and set the example of wearing what you would consider rational garments?'

'There is no good in making oneself peculiar,' was the reply, 'one only gets talked about and laughed at, and loses what little influence one might otherwise possess. The world always ridicules what it is not accustomed to; you must have observed yourself that, however pretty and sensible a dress may be, provided there is anything uncommon or unfashionable

about it, those who venture to wear it are always pointed out as people who ought to be kept under moderate restraint as harmless lunatics; while, however absurd or unhealthy, what is in the fashion is by the majority always tolerated and often admired. It shows how successful and moderate we have been in our attempts at reform, that you have not observed any difference, though we do not indulge in high-heels, or narrow-toes, or corsets, or crinolettes, or long dresses either except in the evening.'

'The worst that can be said of most of the proposed reforms in ladies' dress,' said Professor Wray, who, having had proofs to correct for the mid-day post, had not joined the shooting-party, 'is, that they are either ugly, or else in many ways as inconvenient as those they are designed to supersede.'

'I think it is a pity also,' said Madeline, 'that the divided skirt and the costumes generally recommended by the "Rational Dress Society," should not be within the reach of many who would gladly adopt them; in this way I mean: a woman of limited income can get a useful dress in the prevailing fashion at any shop for a reasonable price, but the demand for any of the forms of "rational dress" is so small, that the price is proportionably great, so that a woman who has no maid to make it for her, and no time or sufficient talent to make it for herself, is really unable to change, however much she may wish it.'

'I quite see that,' said the Professor, 'in fact, a rational dress must have become general before those who need it most, the women-toilers in our mills and factories, can benefit. It is a sad but, I believe, an undoubted fact, that hundreds, indeed thousands of these workers are not only occasionally exposed to danger as it is, but are unable to improve their positions owing to the difficulty of moving with their full skirts amongst the machinery.'

'I should be sorry to see flowing drapery altogether abolished,' said Sir Henry, 'but there must be some way in which ladies might compromise the matter, without long trailing skirts acting as snares for the feet of unwary men,

tight ones which fetter their own movements, or inflated ones that fetter those of every one else who comes within a yard of them.'

'As women are getting more thoroughly educated, more active and helpful,' said Madeline, 'there is, I think, an increasing rebellion amongst the more sensible against the tyranny of fashion; and when we remember what the last hundred years has done for *men* in substituting, on the whole, useful garments for the picturesque but unserviceable finery of the past, *we* are justified, I think, in hoping something from the future. I do not see why it need be a case of utility *versus* beauty, though; and I trust we shall take warning by men's failure to secure the last, and not in our turn sweep away the flowers with the weeds.'

'That woman would certainly be a public benefactor,' said Mrs. Silverton, as she rose from the table, 'who would invent something for us in the shape of dress that should be useful, comfortable, becoming, and tolerably permanent. But this is not a very interesting subject for gentlemen, nor one in which, with all due deference to them, their advice can be of much practical use. What shall we do with our wounded Knight this lovely afternoon?'

'Oh, leave me to take care of myself, it is not fair that you should all be punished because I am a prisoner.'

'We are not going to do anything of the sort,' replied his sister, with her peremptory little nod. 'Madeline, will you ring, dear; and Professor Wray, I know you will not mind helping Watson to wheel the couch out under the veranda, you and Harry can enjoy your cigars, and we will bring our work and books; or if you like we will resume the discussion which was growing so warm that I was obliged to break in upon it the night before last. Auntie, will you join us, or would you rather go for a drive with Mrs. Knagge?'

'That is right,' said Sir Henry, as, after duly weighing the respective merits of a *tête-à-tête* drive and the interest of a general discussion in which they might put on the break occa-

sionally, when theories too alarmingly progressive threatened the old family coach with ruin, Miss Wynter and Mrs. Knagge followed the rest of the party into the veranda. 'I shall want your support,' added Sir Henry, with feigned alarm, 'or these very advanced people, with arguments at their finger's ends, will be too much for me. But perhaps, after all,' he continued, 'Miss Acton has not the courage of her opinions, since for the last two days she has not even referred to the subject of our Tuesday evening's discussion.'

'One would think, to hear you, Harry,' said his sister, laughing, 'that you really liked people of one idea; whereas, I know no one in the world who would be so much bored by them. Madeline has only been giving you time for the process of digestion, having some experience of the circumstances under which "silence is golden."'

'I have heard a great many women quote that old proverb,' said Sir Henry, 'but few who have cared practically to illustrate it.'

'Another argument,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'in favour of our plea for the fullest possible culture. Try shaking a box with just a few coins in it, the clatter is something fearful: but pack it full of bank-notes,' she added, with a glance at Madeline, 'and it is so silent that a stranger might think there was not much in it; only those who know what key will be an "open Sesame" can hope to get at its contents.'

Madeline's hand was laid for a moment with an affectionate gesture upon that of her friend, as though to thank her for her good opinion, but at the same time to deprecate the application of such flattering words to herself. 'The lock on my ideas is a very ordinary one, I am afraid,' she said, with a smile. 'I was not sure,' she continued, turning to Sir Henry, 'if you were sufficiently interested in what we were saying the other night about the pressing necessity there is that women should have greater facilities for self-support to care to resume the discussion, that is all.'

'To show that I *was* "sufficiently interested," I recollect

perfectly that the question of women's fitness and opportunities for work arose out of your claim that all girls should be educated as the great majority of boys are, with a view to some definite occupation.'

'Yes, I do not think study which has not a definite and useful object can fairly be called education. In a race, every competitor is allowed to start fairly; at any rate, those who claim for themselves superior strength and swiftness are not given an advantage.'

'Certainly not; I quite agree that girls should be allowed equal chances to learn everything of which they are capable, or for which they have a natural aptitude.'

'That is something for you to acknowledge, Harry,' said Mrs. Silverton. 'But would any young man, do you think, studying medicine, or science, or reading for the bar, be likely to feel a very great interest in his work if he were made clearly to understand that, however successful he might be in passing his examinations, he must never turn the knowledge he has acquired to any practical use, or hope to make any money by it. Is it not natural that with things as they are at present, an intelligent girl should ask herself, "And after all, when I have worked my utmost, when, in the face of difficulties greater than any my brothers have had to contend against, I have acquired the knowledge which, if I were a boy, would enable me to earn a competence in some useful and honourable profession, is it fair, is it right, that I should be tied hand and foot to prevent my making any use of that knowledge?" Education, without employment to follow, is, as somebody says, like strengthening to their fullest capacity the wings of a young bird, and then cooping it up for life within the bars of a narrow cage.'

'"Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And hope without an object cannot live,"'

quoted Madeline. 'When an active-minded girl has no outlet for her energies, no occupation worthy of the name, it is not

extraordinary, I think, if health, temper, and spirits alike suffer. It is not given to every one to create out of surroundings a busy and useful life, nor to build up a self-sufficing existence out of such unpromising materials as most girls on leaving school are provided with; I know a case in point, and no doubt there are many similar. A lady my mother knew had only one daughter, whom she educated quite on the old spelling-book and sampler system, and instead of gratifying the girl's desire for learning, and encouraging her intellectual tastes, did everything she could to keep her down to the level of mediocrity, which she considered for a woman the only safe standard. The daughter, full of energy and ability inherited from her father (a well-known physician, who, unfortunately for her, died when she was very young), did not, even as she grew older, rebel, but with her spirit and longing for a wider sphere, her health gave way under the constant round of prescribed trivialities. Mrs. Dakin at last became alarmed, and having vainly consulted their country doctor, took her at last to a London physician, who, after making a careful examination and asking a few questions about her habits and mode of life, said, "Your daughter is suffering from a serious complaint, which, for want of a better name, I will call dullness; it is in *your* power to cure it, *I* cannot."'

'I hope,' said Professor Wray, 'the mother had sense enough to see where she had been wrong.'

'Thanks to my parents' influence, yes; poor Mrs. Dakin came to them as her nearest neighbours for advice; she was very like an old hen in charge of an enterprising duckling; but having made such a *fiasco* of her system of training, she wisely determined on their suggestion, that though swimming seemed to her a very unnatural and doubtful proceeding, if her daughter *would* not or *could* not be contented to follow example and precedent, it must be better to indulge her than lose her; so Mary was allowed to follow her natural bent, and soon recovered her energy and spirits. By the help of an uncle and of the old doctor who had given her mother such good advice,

she went to Paris, threw herself heart and soul into the study of medicine, took her degree, and now, having a large practice, is able very materially to help her mother, who is living with her, apparently quite happy and contented at finding that, in spite of her "eccentricity" and her constant occupation, Mary can still spare time to be attentive and affectionate.'

'But was not that an exceptional case?' said Miss Wynter. 'Do you think girls, as a rule, have any of this craving for work, or desire for a wider sphere than is offered by their family or social circle? I must say I have not seen it.'

'For my part,' said Mrs. Knagge, 'what girls mostly seem to care about, I think, is their own amusement.'

'Can you expect anything better,' said Madeline, 'when they are, in a great measure, shut out from the serious occupations and responsibilities of life, and condemned to trifles; when parents prefer for their daughters a life of idleness to a life of independence, practically allowing them to grow up with the idea that work is not a privilege, but a curse?'

'The girls are not to blame,' said Mrs. Silverton; 'I have known many who, on leaving school, have tried to keep up their studies, but after a time they have grown weary; there was no emulation, there were so many distractions, there was so little encouragement, and no practical result to be hoped for, so the lives that in some definite profession might have been made full of usefulness and beauty, drift, most likely, into a soured old maidenhood, or into an unsatisfactory marriage, from either of which a little honest satisfying work might have saved them.'

'It will be a happy thing for the rising generation,' said Professor Wray, 'when all fathers of families, however secure their position may seem, have the sense to follow the example of Charlemagne, who had each of his daughters, so say the chroniclers, taught some occupation, so that if ever, as he said, they should experience adverse fortune, against which nothing could absolutely guarantee them, they might still have the means of subsistence.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'as things stand at present, you can hardly expect that parents should be willing to invest money in educating their daughters for a profession which, if they marry, will probably be abandoned.'

'If,' replied the Professor, 'a son is so delicate that there appears small chance of his living beyond five-and-twenty, you would not think his father justified in making that a reason for saving money upon his education.'

'Besides,' said Madeline, 'those parents who are able to save a little money for a daughter's marriage-portion, would surely act much more wisely and kindly in spending it upon a professional training, of which no reverses can deprive her, which no imprudent trustees can invest foolishly, and no careless husband or children can possibly squander.'

'Still,' said Sir Henry, 'I cannot help thinking that to a married woman a profession would be practically useless.'

'I do not see that,' replied his sister: 'supposing she marries and is childless, it must be a blessing to have some wider interests than are involved in housekeeping; supposing she marries a man in the same profession as herself, working as his partner she may be an unspeakable help to him. Should he happen (and men are sometimes inconsiderate enough) to fail in health or business, her capacity for bread-winning may perhaps be the only thing that stands between them and utter poverty, as in the case of that brave German woman, Babette Schnell, who, seeing ruin staring them in the face, owing to her husband's love of amusement and indifference to his profession, learnt his art of dentistry, and by this means supported herself and her daughter.'

'But all this, my dear,' said Miss Wynter, seriously, 'is quite bringing a woman out of her proper place; if she does her duty, she will find quite enough to occupy her in looking after her husband and children and her domestic affairs.'

'But, auntie, even a young mother, you must allow, unless she spends her whole time in dressing and undressing and otherwise worrying her baby, must have hours daily at her

command; and by-and-by, as the children grow up, and the younger ones go to school, the older to college, it is the same. Again, when they are married or launched in life, might not the thirty or forty years that remain to her be happily and usefully employed in professional work, which would keep her from rusting into premature old age, or from being absorbed by narrow aims and interests and becoming the victim of dyspepsia and discontent.'

'My humble opinion is,' said Professor Wray, 'that any household and domestic duties will be performed with greater pleasure and efficiency by those women whose intelligence has been trained in some other vocation; wider interests will enable them to rise above the irritation of petty cares, while in the matter of domestic economy you would look in vain, I am convinced, amongst them for a bride like the one mentioned in the *Saturday Review*, who started on housekeeping by dividing her husband's income of 400*l.* per annum thus: "There will be 100*l.* for rent, 100*l.* for my clothes, 100*l.* for his, and you know we cannot possibly eat 100*l.*" So even from the selfish point of view which will always, I am afraid, influence the majority of men, we are likely to find the comfort of our homes much safer in the hands of one whose business faculties have been developed, and to obtain more communion and sympathy in life's trials and anxieties from one who has herself experienced the like.'

'And supposing a woman,' said Madeline, 'is left a widow, as so many are, in straitened circumstances, what a blessing a profession must be, saving her from the misery of becoming a burden upon friends, or passing her life in morbid repining, and a miserable struggle to keep up appearances. It is not only bread, though, that is wanted, but occupation for head, hands, and heart. The life of thousands of women in the upper and middle classes is often painfully empty and colourless, until, like the girl I was speaking of just now, they go very near, as George Macdonald says, to falling into a consumption "just from discontent, the discontent of a soul which is meant to sit

at the Father's table, and so cannot content itself with the husks that the swine eat." I fail to understand how any one can think about the subject at all without being saddened by the waste of mental and moral power in the aimless uncertainty which characterises the lives of so many girls and women, whose only vista is—

> "A wall so blank
> Their shadow they thank
> For sometimes falling there."

'But do you not think,' suggested Sir Henry, 'that when a girl's nature seems 'to eat into itself,' as it were, it is less "for lack of something else to hew and hack" than because her heart is not filled, because in some way the emotional side of her nature is not satisfied.'

'I cannot believe,' said Madeline, with some earnestness, 'that an aimless and objectless life, however full of affection, can be an altogether happy and useful one; a woman's nature like a man's is many-sided, and in spite of the poet's much-quoted assertion, love was never meant to be her "whole existence"; what makes it "of man's life a thing apart" but the fact that existence to him, as a rule, is full of varied and absorbing interests, as it should be also to her, if life is to be as complete as nature intended; for *she* has also an intellect which demands cultivation, energies which demand free exercise, and emotions which, though they may colour her life, should not, for want of counterbalancing forces, be allowed completely to govern it.'

'Certainly,' said Professor Wray, 'seeing that each woman is a complete and distinct individual, with a separate personality, she should, in all justice, have the means to live happily and usefully without necessarily uniting herself to any man; I do not by this, mind you, mean to deny that either sex will find in true marriage a fuller and more complete life.'

'It may be so,' replied Madeline, 'but even if it were not such a lottery that many from choice remain single, those who

make a girl's probable marriage a reason for denying her the means of self-support must be ignorant that there are about a million more women than men in the country, who, for no worse crime than that of a celibacy which is unavoidable, are condemned by prejudice to a life of poverty.'

'But all single women are not poor,' said Mrs. Knagge.

'Not necessarily, but out of the forty-three per cent of Englishwomen above the age of twenty, who, according to the last census, are either widows or unmarried, a very small proportion are wealthy; and surely such a fact as this makes it imperative that there should be more sources of self-supporting, self-sufficing industry, open to women.'

'I had no idea that the disproportion was so great,' said Sir Henry; 'it does certainly make the question a more serious one than I thought.'

'And this statement, the accuracy of which I can endorse,' said Professor Wray, 'does not apply to any particular country, for almost all over the civilised world women are greatly in the majority, and if we refuse the means of self-support to any whose future is not amply provided for, the question becomes one for political economists. How are these women to be maintained? "To keep them," as Miss Davies wisely remarks, "from earning money, does not prevent their spending it, and if they are not supporting themselves they must be consuming the present earnings or accumulated savings of somebody else." Until government is prepared to pension every unmarried woman, until men are prepared to pay an extra tax for their support, they have no right whatever to put difficulties in the way of their earning an independent livelihood.'

'I have no doubt you will, after all the arguments used for my conversion, think me very prejudiced,' said Sir Henry, 'but I own I do not like the thought of well-bred, gently-nurtured women, contending in the arena with men, at the risk of the poetry which surrounds them being sunk in the rough prose of a hard struggle for existence. There is much that is attractive, I think, in the *cultus* of positivism which regards women as the

priestesses of humanity, whose condition is to be one of repose, and whose mission necessitates her abstaining altogether from the practical pursuits of the rougher sex.*

'Such a visionary conception of our mission in life,' said Madeline, 'could only be made to apply to a certain privileged class, and in them, I think, we should soon find its tendency would be to develop the worst forms of selfishness and egotism. If, in the business of life, men's manners are so rough that women, for their own sakes, must be kept apart, all I can say is the sooner men reform their manners the better.'

'They will never do that,' said the Professor, 'by excluding women; besides, we have stern facts to deal with, not poetical ideas; the question has still to be answered: How are our—I will not say surplus, but—unattached womenkind to be provided for, if the means of earning an honourable living is denied them?'

'I do not think it is altogether fair, though,' said Sir Henry, 'to speak as if they had no alternative, as a rule, between marriage and poverty. I should be sorry to think that many women were like that Scotch lassie whose mother, when her late mistress, on going over the bride's comfortable cottage and well-kept garden, remarked what a fortunate girl Mary was, replied, "Aweel, ma'am, maybe, maybe, but there's joost ane little draaback, she canna bide her man." A great many women, as you say, have no "drawbacks" to provide for them, but comparatively few, I should think, above the working classes, are without a father, a brother, a son, or some male relative, ready and willing to support them.'

'So far is this from being the case,' replied Madeline, 'that on the contrary, three millions out of every six adult English-women are at this moment working for a living, two out of three independently, and what difficulties they have to struggle against! The best years of their lives are wasted, their energies are paralysed by want of money, or training, or opportunities for making available such gifts as they possess. If you had seen what I have I am sure you would be convinced that the woman's

* Comte's *General View of Positivism.*

cry for work must be met by something more practical than sentimental objections, or even temporary palliatives, for it is want, it is actual hunger which is forcing many of them on. And bad as it is with the poor, the case is worse with the daughters of many professional men — clergymen, doctors, lawyers, officers—whose income being all wanted to keep up their position will not bear the strain of providing for the life-long maintenance of idle or incapable children. It is all very well for the *Times* to say, as it did upon one occasion, that a woman's right is the right to a natural protector, but actual facts show that a large number of women are forced not only to stand alone, but to be the support of others; I could give you instance after instance of women who have had dependent upon them aged parents, sick husbands, or even nephews and nieces, and who, after all their exertions on behalf of others, are now brought to a penniless old age, and obliged to depend on charity for support.* And I do not see how things are to mend so long as women are debarred from the higher trades and professions.'

'And so long,' said Professor Wray, 'as they are educated with one view—viz., that when they grow up they will inevitably get married and be provided for; indeed, to the majority of poor, but well-born girls, no choice is given between a husband and nothing, which, as an American writer says, is very often "a choice between two nothings"; and so if death or reverse of fortune comes to the father of a family while the sons are already above want or on the road to self-support, the daughters have too often nothing before them but penury, gradual sinking in the social scale, or a loveless, miserable marriage; since, so far from being trained to a high conception of the dignity of labour, they are imbued with the notion that idleness means refinement, and that the women (I beg their pardon, "the ladies") of a family ought not to do anything, and yet if work is honourable for the one sex, it cannot be less so for the other.'

*See *Reports of Governesses' Benevolent Institution.*

'People think that sort of prejudice is dying out,' said Madeline, 'and yet not very long ago I heard of a lady who got into sad disgrace with the mistress of a girl's school, by urging upon her that the certificate of the Universities local examiners would be of great service to her pupils in their future life. "Madam," was the reply, "the young ladies in my establishment will never require to put their education to any practical use." Idleness was the hall-mark of good-breeding, a woman would lose caste by work, and so, whatever abilities they might possess, their vocation was to be just that of a Dresden china shepherdess, no more; to smile and look pretty, and be ready to harmonise with the drawing-room furniture of any man who could afford to give the high price requisite for such a possession. Surely every woman should have some more lofty aim in life than this unworthy waiting upon the chances of marriage.'

'You do not seem to have a very high opinion of the married state, Miss Acton,' said Mrs. Knagge, feeling bound, in her husband's absence, to wield his harmless weapon of small criticism.

'I hope my ideal is not altogether a low one,' was the reply, 'but it seems to me that the fact of depending on marriage for the means of living, of looking upon it, in short, as a species of life-annuity investment, and the consequent tendency to direct every thought towards it, is enough to taint the finest nature in the world.'

'And supposing a woman,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'to be placed by rank and wealth out of reach of this danger, she is none the worse for having a serious aim in life instead of looking upon it as a summer's day, in which she has nothing to do but to bask in the sunshine, and ignore all disagreeables.'

'I must acknowledge, for my part,' said Professor Wray, 'I cannot enter into the feelings of any man who would not rather be the deliberate choice of a thoughtful, independent woman, than marry a helpless, characterless doll, with no

resources in herself, or one who has been trained on the principle of good old Dr. Gregory, "that women must conceal such sense as they possess unless they would disgust the sex they were born to please"; or one who, being taught that marriage was the end and aim of life, was ready to accept the first good offer. It is such marriages as these which help to fill up the records of our Divorce Court; far, far better that women should spend their lives in ceaseless toil than marry, I do not say without love only, unless their choice is such as tends to their higher development, since it is as much a woman's duty as a man's not to live merely for her immediate surroundings, but to make humanity at large the better and happier for her existence.'

'It is nothing but masculine egotism which has made the success or failure of a woman's existence,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'depend upon gaining the love of men who have retained for themselves a multitude of other chances, while they decree that she shall have no choice between marriage and insignificance.'

'Poor little trodden-down, oppressed, much injured being,' apostrophised her brother.

'It is no good expecting you to be serious, Harry, I know; but Madeline was going to speak.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Sir Henry, turning towards her; 'you, Miss Acton, are not so unscrupulously severe and sweeping in your statements, so you have a right to the best attention of all reasonable men.'

'Which means that you will give me yours,' replied Madeline, smiling. 'I was going to say that I really think men suffer by the present *régime* not much less than women; in their affections, from the risk they run of being married merely for a home; and also in their brains and purses, which are often so unduly taxed for the support of a household, that they are in danger of becoming little more than mere money-making machines.'

'If every girl,' said Professor Wray, 'were taught that it is neither wise nor prudent to marry until she possesses, or is

in a position to earn at least enough for her own maintenance, and the means of doing so were put within her reach, future generations would profit in more ways than one, and husbands would soon, I suspect, begin to congratulate themselves on the change; besides, every woman has as much right to independence as a man, it is no less necessary to her moral dignity, and in common fairness she is entitled to at least such a choice of employments as will enable her if she pleases to remain single; or, if she marries, to undertake the responsibilities of that most sacred of all human relations, at the dictate not of necessity but of love, not of ambition but of genuine esteem.'

'You allow,' said Sir Henry, 'that marriage is the happiest and most natural state, and yet in a way, by making women's work more remunerative, you put a premium as it were upon celibacy; is it not to be feared that the result of this universal independence which you advocate will be that many women who would have married and made happy and useful wives, may remain single?'

'And is it not better they should, until they are fortunate enough to meet one who will compel their highest friendship and strongest affection? In face of the many evils daily resulting from heedless rushing into marriage, anything which will make people weigh its responsibilities beforehand should be welcomed as a blessing.'

'Apparently some people,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'would like to drive women into matrimony like silly cattle into a pen, by closing every other avenue; I must say that is a noble view of the subject to take. Oh, Harry, after all we have been saying to think of your remaining still unconvinced, and bringing forward such selfish arguments too!'

'I am not quite so stiff-necked, perhaps, as I seem,' was the reply, 'but no convictions worthy the name can be formed without examining a question from every point of view.'

'Quite right,' said the Professor; 'the theory, however, which you have just been putting forward, more by way of

argument than from conviction, I think, reminds me of the Zend Avesta's decree, that "any damsel who having reached the age of eighteen shall refuse to marry, must remain in hell till the Resurrection"; we do not, in modern times perhaps, hear such open condemnation of the crime of celibacy, but those who make the risk of it a motive for denying girls a thorough training and a fair field in which to labour, practically utter very much the same denunciation; for not only would the ability to earn an honourable living have saved many girls from sacrificing their self-respect and happiness by making a loveless and unsuitable marriage, but herein, if I mistake not, lies the solution of that social problem the vice of our great cities, the demoralisation of modern society.'

'Home is a woman's proper place you say, but how if she have no home worthy the name? I can assure you, as a fact, that in many cases it is ceaseless grinding toil, starvation wages, and the hopelessness of procuring any honest employment which swell the ranks of vice; aye, and I believe that many a gentle, pure-minded woman is, in despite of all her highest feelings, yearly driven into a life that is abhorrent to her better nature by this cause, and this alone. M. Duchatelet, and few are better qualified to judge, says that of all the incentives to vice in Paris and other large towns, none is more influential than the miserable poverty to which women are reduced by want of work and insufficient earnings, owing principally to the usurpation by men of a large number of occupations in every way more suitable to women. Employers themselves recognise the impossibility of living on such salaries as they give, and the usual question put to a girl who seeks employment in a Paris shop is—"Has she any means to pay for pretty toilettes?" The "means" being a term only too well understood. And in England, though less openly cynical upon the subject, we are far from being above reproach; unable to obtain work, refused admittance to a workhouse, what is a woman to do? Can she keep body and soul together upon a shilling a-week and a loaf of bread? "It is not rare" (to apply

M. Duchatelet's words again) "to find even widows or deserted wives, of hitherto irreproachable character, becoming abandoned at last in the hope of saving their families from starvation, after having vainly tried to procure the necessaries of life in every honest occupation open to them." Competition in the narrow lists framed by superstition and prejudice, the depreciation of her labour, the charge of impropriety brought against any woman who dares to be peculiar, the mercenary marriages into which they are forced for want of proper independence, are all combining to their dishonour, and the sooner it is universally recognised that every woman has a right to claim a position independently of her relations to the other sex, the better it will be for society.'

'I have often thought,' said Miss Wynter, 'that men ought not to monopolise work that could be as well or better done by women; if the ladies who spend so much of their time in agitating for admission to men's professions would only agree not to enter any shop where men are needlessly employed, in the sale, for instance, of feminine apparel, they might be of some use.'

'That is a very good suggestion, auntie, so far as it goes,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'though it does not touch the position of girls of the upper and upper-middle classes, and therefore there is still some necessity for the agitation which you deprecate; but there is no doubt that with women of lower rank also the chances of earning a competence are lamentably small.'

'I cannot see how any one with the smallest sense of justice,' said Madeline, 'can think it fair that men with broad shoulders and strong muscles, who are capable of undertaking any labour where physical strength is a *sine quâ non*, should receive high wages for light mechanical duties which women would do as well or better—cutting or dressing ladies' hair, devising their costumes, measuring out yards of ribbon, winding up lace, retailing pins and needles, cakes and sweets, are occupations that in common justice ought to be given up to the physically weaker sex.'

'Waiting at table, too,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'is, I think, essentially a woman's work; if I had my way I would treble the tax on men servants.'

'How about Watson and consistency, my dear?' said Sir Henry, smiling, 'you can do as you please in your own household, and yet you have always one, and sometimes two men to wait at table.'

'You would not have me turn away an old servant like Watson, who has been from time immemorial a sort of factotum at Crag's Nest, and was so fond of Fred as a baby that it was difficult to say if he was more butler than nurse; and George, as you know, though he does wait so well, was only engaged as a coachman; but if we make any change I shall certainly follow Lady Gower's example, she has not a man in the house excepting the coachman at night, and I am sure her three parlour-maids in their grey gowns and spotless caps, collars, cuffs, and muslin aprons, are the perfection of neat-handed Phyllises.'

'I think it is very likely,' said Professor Wray, 'that if women would qualify themselves they might obtain employment as reporters, as pianoforte-tuners, and in many other untried fields; photography too, I think, might be more widely practised by women; while in regard to watch-making, Sir John Bennett considers that if English women were allowed and encouraged to make the delicate parts of a watch, their work would be so superior as to greatly increase the sale, to the advantage of both men and women; in this respect, Switzerland is far ahead of us.'

'In other directions, however,' said Madeline, 'though much remains to be done, I have noticed a gradual improvement. In looking at the last report of the "Society for the Employment of Women," I see that lithography promises to be a fairly profitable industry for English girls, as it has long been for those on the Continent; the students at the school of wood-engraving are beginning to earn fair wages; the demand for efficient women-clerks and book-keepers is increasing slowly; in

printing it is the same, while in regard to clerkships in the General Post Office, Mr. Fawcett's report to the House of Commons was that they had given such satisfaction that the employment of women was being gradually and steadily extended.'

'Seeing that this is the case,' said Sir Henry, 'one is inclined to ask what more would you have?'

'Madeline has been showing you the bright side of the picture,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'I do not think we have a right to be contented until every woman, whatever her social position, has, at least, equal resources with those enjoyed by men.'

'And after all,' said Madeline, 'the supply falls very far short of the demand; we find still very few parents, above the pressure of immediate necessity, who recognise it as a duty to train daughters as well as sons for some definite profession; it can scarcely, according to current ideas perhaps, be expected that people of gentle birth though limited means, while their boys become lawyers, doctors, clergymen, or get commissions in the army or navy, should be willing for their girls to sink to a lower social level as telegraph-clerks, or apprentices to a printer; and yet, though there is a general tendency to keep them out of the higher professions, the necessity for work remains the same.'

'Just so,' said Professor Wray; 'in former days girls or widows of good family were, for their protection from the rough conditions of the time, sent straight into a convent, or married as quickly as possible; advancing civilisation has rendered this no longer necessary, women can live now without male protection, but the question echoing on every side is "How?" Each step of a woman who wishes to earn an honourable livelihood is beset with difficulties, the patience and courage needed by her are far beyond those men require in the like circumstances, so that only the exceptionally brave and energetic can succeed in working out for themselves an independent career. Work that is menial or ill-paid they are

quite welcome to; but when it comes to a question of profitable employment—"Clear the way," cries masculine selfishness, "that we may have more room."'

'Men expect to be allowed to do whatever they are capable of doing,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'and how they can justify it to themselves to sneer as many do at women for desiring the same thing I cannot understand.'

'Because, I suppose, they start,' said Madeline, 'upon the assumption that only in exceptional cases has a woman public as well as private duties; that it is unfeminine for her to engage in any occupation outside a certain very narrow range, and that they do her a kindness, therefore, by putting stumbling-blocks in her way.'

'I am not inclined to impute such universally good intentions,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'or else why should so many men be tolerant of women's work only when it is not lucrative, or is something that they cannot possibly do themselves?'

'Come now,' remonstrated Sir Henry, 'I do not think things are quite so bad as you represent; I do not think men, or society we will say, is quite so hard upon women who are in earnest in trying to carve out a career for themselves; in more than one paper and magazine I have seen articles so encouraging that you might have written them yourself.'

'In spite of that, I maintain that when it comes to a question of the higher employment of women, society in the main is like the good man who said, "I will not shed thy blood friend, but I will hold thee under water until thou art drowned." If you tie a woman's wrists together what good is it to say "by all means use your hands in the way that suits you best"; if you fetter her ankles, to declare "now if you can beat us in the race you are perfectly welcome to do so." The fact is that, intellectually speaking, women have been treated as they are in China; men have dwarfed their feet, and then told them that nature never intended them to stand alone, but that as a reward for absolute submission they will graciously extend to them—at least to a certain number of them—their support.'

'But—excuse me, my dear, it may be my own obtuseness, but your accusations seem a little vague; what are the particular handcuffs and fetters that you have in your mind, and which stir up such warmth of indignation?'

'Let me see. Well, for instance, a woman may serve on the School Board, which is, I allow, a position of trust and responsibility; she is welcome to spend her money and time in the service of Government, but though the faculties which are so useful in this capacity would equally fit her for many branches of the Civil Service, she is shut out from all well-paid offices of State. She may possess shrewdness and reasoning faculties which would have placed a lawyer at the head of his profession, but Coke and Blackstone must be sealed books to her so far as making any practical use of them is concerned.'

'A woman's sympathy and powers of observation again,' said Professor Wray, 'eminently qualify her for the practice of medicine, and yet what prejudices she had, and still has to encounter here? It is a question whether a woman's more scrupulous moral sense might not be somewhat in her way upon the Stock Exchange, but many have shown business capacity and organizing power which would have been of the greatest possible use to a banker, a merchant, the director of a public company, and yet in none of these capacities has she had any chance, so far as I know, of distinguishing herself.'

'There is one though, I think only one, public company,' said Madeline, in which women are directors.'

'I am glad to hear it,' replied the Professor; 'I have long been of opinion that every kind of intellectual work would gain by the co-operation of men and women, since, looking at things as they must from different points of view, the one is able to supply what the other lacks.'

'Was it not Franklin,' said Madeline, 'who first compared men and women to the two halves of a pair of scissors, meaning that the one cannot get on without the other, while the difference between them does not imply so much the choice of

different pursuits, as each contributing his or her individual part to the perfection of a common work.'

'I have often,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'thought of a profession which women might engage in with advantage to all concerned, I mean that of an architect. No one denies them their share of artistic faculties, so I do not see why their designs should not be equal in beauty to many of our best works; and certainly when it comes to the practical side of the business in domestic architecture, we should gain immensely by the increased comfort and utility of our dwellings, the plans of which I am sure are often lamentably deficient in common-sense.'

'Quite true, and it would be a great advantage again to all concerned,' said Professor Wray, 'if capable women were appointed in equal numbers with men as Government Inspectors of Schools; they are acknowledged everywhere to have a keen insight into practical details, and the working of our educational system would, I doubt not, be much more perfect as well as more economical, if the eyes of women as well as men were more frequently brought to bear upon it. Indeed, when one begins to enumerate the offices which women might fill to advantage, but from which jealousy or prejudice has shut them out, it is not easy to stop; although I spoke just now of the difficulty many an honest woman in Paris has in earning a livelihood, there is no doubt that in some ways France is here in advance of us; for instance, the French railway companies employ thousands of women, not only as booking-clerks, but occasionally also as "pointsmen" and "signalmen," the salaries also are the same as those received by men, that is to say, an ordinary clerk of either sex receives from 40*l.* to 50*l.* per annum, head-clerks from 72*l.* to 96*l.*'*

'Would you have no limit then,' asked Sir Henry, 'to the professions which you think should be thrown open to women?'

'None but that which is set by their own capacity, or want

* Paper read at the Social Science Congress, Cheltenham (1878), *On the Industrial Employment of Women in France, compared with England.*

of capacity. If a woman be endowed by nature with high gifts of any description, why, in the name of justice, should she be forbidden to use them? You believe in Huxley I know, and it would be impossible to speak more decidedly than he did the year before last at the annual distribution of prizes at the London School of Medicine for Women. "They ought decidedly," he says, "to be allowed to take up any career for which they feel themselves fitted; I do not understand why free-trade in these matters should not apply everywhere; why free access to every calling should not be thrown open to every human being."'

'You would except the Church, I presume,' said Miss Wynter, gravely.

'Well, if you must have priests and apostles, links as it were between the spiritual and the material world, I see no reason on earth why women are not as well, and in some ways better fitted for the office than men; they are universally acknowledged to be more refined as a rule, more *spirituelle*, more moral than men.'

'But, my dear sir,' remonstrated Miss Wynter, 'do you lay no weight on St. Paul's prohibition, "I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp authority." "Let your women keep silence in the churches," and so on.'

'By taking the literal meaning of isolated passages in the Bible,' was the rejoinder, 'you may prove almost anything.'

'But,' replied Miss Wynter, 'we are told that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and therefore in following it we cannot well go wrong.'

'That text,' said the Professor, 'is a mistranslation, in the original we have no "is given," the text reads, "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for reproof," &c., that is to say, all which is divinely inspired is worthy to be received as a guide; but the rest followed literally is more likely to lead people astray than anything else. The Bible, for instance, is quoted in defence of Mormonism, and on the strength of the texts to which you refer certain Christians have even argued that women ought not even to sing or repeat the responses,

while the question was at one time seriously raised whether it was not unbefitting a woman to answer with so much as an audible "Amen."'

'That is a very different matter, though,' said Miss Wynter.

'But they cannot "keep silence" and sing at the same time, that is very certain.'

'And in point of fact we know that women did both prophesy and preach in the early Church,' said Madeline; 'I think you will find,' she went on, addressing Miss Wynter, 'that the words in the Bible are not only "upon my servants," but "upon my servants and my handmaids will I pour out my gifts, and they shall prophesy, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;" while St. Paul gives special instructions as to how women were to prophesy, referring to the Eastern custom which led women always to veil themselves in public, he directs that when they teach they are to be covered.'*

'Exactly,' said the Professor; the apostle simply availed himself of the notions current amongst the Jews, without meaning to endorse them as intrinsically sound; in those days, when the idea of a woman's throwing off her veil in public meant to the popular mind something like throwing off all sense of modesty, he naturally would not have Christian women bring disrepute upon their religion by startling innovations; but though (in spite of his views having widened considerably) he still retained some of the social prejudices of his age and early training, it evidently never occured to him that the vocation of religious teaching, even in public, was to be exclusively a masculine function, else, as Miss Acton suggests, why should he give directions as to how they should appear?'

'He distinctly says, however,' replied Miss Wynter, '"I suffer not a woman to teach," and reproves them for speaking in the congregation, telling them to ask the husband at home.'

'It is thought by some of the best authorities,' said the Professor, that the apostle on this occasion, so far from laying

* 1 Corinthians, xi. 13.

down a general rule for all times, was referring to a specific scandal, to the disorderly and contentious spirit of some members of his congregation, men and women, husbands and wives, who had taken to disputing in public, and causing confusion in the churches. In such a case the only course was to silence one, and according to all precedent it was the woman's place to give way. However this may be, it is very certain St. Paul was not in a position to instruct the nineteenth century in practical matters; and, indeed, so far from claiming the infallibility accorded him by many, he himself says in referring to some other social questions, "I speak this of permission, not of commandment;" and remember if you claim inspiration for isolated texts, the words of the prophet Joel that Miss Acton referred to just now, "My sons and my daughters shall prophesy," which may be translated "preach," are equally significant, and as quoted by St. Peter should carry with them equal authority.'

'Besides, is not the whole drift of Christ's teaching,' said Madeline, 'one of liberty and personal responsibility, which, had He lived in these days, would have placed Him and His disciples in the foremost ranks of our supporters; for His doctrine, if anything, was one of perfect equality between men and women, Jews and Gentiles, bond and free; He never by word or action assigned to women an inferior place, and as for their finding their sole legitimate sphere of labour in domestic matters, I believe the only occasion on which He actually blamed a woman was when He reproved Martha for too great an attention to her household affairs, or at least, for expecting her sister also to make them the boundary of her ideas.'

'People run to the Bible professedly to be taught the truth,' said Mrs. Silverton '(I do not mean you, auntie, of course, I am speaking generally), but their real object is, as a rule, I think, to twist its records into props for their own particular convictions.'

'And those who, instead of taking the general spirit of its teaching,' said Madeline, 'insist upon literal interpretations, are really not much wiser, I think, than the Chinese manu-

facturer who, being required to reproduce a mutilated set of china, took great credit to himself for copying not only the form and design, but also all the flaws and cracks of the original. A great deal of the opposition, and many of the difficulties put in our way have been due, I think, to the interpretation given to a few stray utterances of St. Paul.'

'And yet,' said Professor Wray, 'the apostles and their immediate successors must have had wider views of women's mission in the Church than were held in later times, for not only were deaconesses an institution, but in some parts of Christendom, so I have understood, there were priestesses also, who gave orders, preached, and taught.'

'Who is your authority?' asked Miss Wynter; 'of course, if the truth of your statement could be vouched for, it would be an argument worthy of consideration, although all one's feelings might be against it.'

'Chateaubriand, in his *Histoire du Christianism*, makes the statement, I believe, and also gives several references to well-known authorities; but we want no further proof that women officiated in the early Church than is to be found in the restrictions of a later date; for instance, the eleventh Canon of the Council of Laodicea forbad their being ordained to the ministry, while other Canons of the Council of Orleans, Paris, &c., prove that for a long period there were women who preached, baptized, administered the sacrament, and filled various offices in the Church during the apostolic age, which they were deprived of later by ecclesiastical enactments; and apart from custom and prejudice, what is there so alarming in the idea, why should your feelings be against it?'

'It seems to me utterly beyond all reason, the notion of women standing up in the pulpit.'

'It is not the custom, I grant; but what then?'

'I cannot believe that any modest, right-feeling woman would do it.'

'And yet,' said Madeline, quietly, 'where would you find more gentle, modest women than among the quakers, who have always

refused to recognise the assumed superiority of one sex over the other. Among the early Methodists, too, the women preached, and no doubt the records of their younger, purer days would afford many a prototype for the gentle, high-souled Dinah Morris.'

'I cannot meet you in argument, my dear,' said Miss Wynter, her usual good nature tempered by solicitude at finding a girl, whom she could not help liking, holding doctrines that she so entirely disapproved. 'You young people are so very much in earnest that it is possible you may get your way some day; I hope, however, I may not live long enough to see a woman in the pulpit.'

'Save as a matter of principle, I do not know that I either have any great ambition in that direction,' was the reply; 'what I feel much more strongly is that women, who are so sadly in need of work, should be so entirely cut off from branches of the Civil Service, which many are so well qualified to fill. At the British Museum Library, for example, there is a large staff of officers employed at salaries varying from 120*l.* to over 500*l.* a-year; but no woman, however highly educated, fitted for, and desirous of obtaining such a post, has a chance of competing for it. The Post Office, thanks to Mr. Fawcett's influence, is the one department in which there has been an attempt to give men and women equal chances, but there are few men such as he was.'

'Doctors, lawyers, Members of Parliament, the majority of them, at least,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'find it to their interest to bow down to the idol of immemorial usage; but monopolists always have to give way before the force of public opinion, that is one consolation; and others will have sooner or later to follow obstructive doctors off the path which they, in their turn, are selfishly trying to block.'

'Ah, I remember,' said Sir Henry, 'you were complaining just now that lawyers are determined to refuse women fair play; that though some women of marked ability have been making this profession their goal for years, prejudice will not

give them a chance to play the part of Portia. Now, if I were a bencher, and any lady were desirous of distinguishing herself in my line of life, I have no doubt I should do all I could to help her, but, at the same time, I cannot understand any woman wishing it. Think of the degree of publicity involved, the unpleasant cases they might have to deal with, to say nothing of a thousand minor disagreeables.'

'No position in life for any earnest man or woman can hope to be entirely free from these,' said Professor Wray; 'but I do not know that this supplies a valid reason for avoiding it; and there is no compulsion that I know of used to force counsel to accept cases they do not like. Women are, I know, not generally supposed to have judicial minds; but this, being interpreted, means simply, as we have said before, that their training has, as a rule, not been of a nature likely to develop their logical faculties. I venture to think that we should have fewer legal quibbles if women had more to do with the making and administering of the laws; their love of arriving quickly at a conclusion, instead of arguing round and round a subject, turning it, as we do, inside out, and viewing it in every possible light, would make them more expeditious, and, when properly trained, not less exact.'

'In America, as no doubt you know,' said Madeline, 'many women-lawyers are already practising successfully. In the year 1868 the only legal journal of any value in the West, the Chicago *Legal News*, was started by a lady, Mrs. Bradwell, who was shortly after called to the bar. In Iowa, a woman, Mrs. Foster, has been appointed one of the committee to examine candidates for the bar; she and her husband in partnership, under the title of Foster and Foster, have won many a case together; and, by the way, I think there could not be a better answer to the objection that a professional life for a woman must interfere with the comfort and happiness of her home, than Mrs. Foster's own simple words, in which, at a meeting in 1878, she gave an account of her reasons for studying law: "I claim no heroism," she said, "either in pursuit of my legal

studies or in the performance of my professional duties. I began the study of law because my husband is a lawyer, and because I wanted to know what he knew, and do as much as I could what he did. I have read Blackstone for hours, with my little children playing about me, and I was as ready to pause and attend to their small wants as though I had been engaged with my needle, and quite as well as though I had been reading a gay romance; I passed my examinations, and was introduced to the profession at my husband's earnest request; and to-day the firm of Foster and Foster is harmonious in itself, and at peace with all the world."'

'That does not sound as if she had neglected her husband for her work,' said Mrs. Silverton. 'But I am inclined to go much further than you—besides the question of a woman's right to obtain an honourable living by the law, ought women in general to be denied the advice of one of our own sex as counsel, the sympathy of our fellows on a jury, a decision from a woman's point of view by one of our own sex as judge?'

'The objection of publicity which the majority of women shrink from applies to all these,' said Sir Henry.

'But,' replied Madeline, 'if on examining the question thoroughly, you find the evils on the other side so much worse than the unpleasantness on this, is it not cowardice and selfishness rather than true modesty for one's own comfort's sake to keep in the background? Besides, if we look at the question fairly, there is no more publicity in being a clerk or manager of a bank or in a merchant's office than behind the counter of a shop; there is no more publicity in working at the catalogues in the British Museum Library than in writing there for the press, or studying as hundreds do week after week; nor can I see that there is anything unwomanly in such work as framing legal documents, investigating authorities, citing precedents, preparing evidence——'

'Or even pleading in court,' said the Professor. 'There would be no more publicity for the woman-counsel than for the

woman-witness ; in a court of justice than on the stage, or in the lecture-room.'

'Nature never meant women to speak in public,' said Miss Wynter ; 'to begin with, they have not voice enough to do it.'

'Pardon me,' said Professor Wray, 'I think you are mistaken there. A man's voice—Glaisher is my authority—will, under favourable conditions, reach a mile, a woman's two ; it is the natural result of their being higher pitched, just as in a band playing at a distance you will hear the clarionet or fife when the trombone is quite inaudible.'

'Well,' replied the old lady, somewhat inconsequently, 'I shall never like the idea of women lecturing in public ; and I do not believe any nice woman would care to do it. I am sure I may say this without being personal, for I know neither Miss Acton nor Nellie have ever done such a thing.'

'We have taken part in debates, though, at college many times,' replied Madeline ; 'and in a large assembly it comes to very much the same thing. I assure you, I know many very nice and very womanly women, too, who frequently lecture in public.'

'On the grounds upon which you object to this, auntie,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'you might just as reasonably prohibit women the stage and the concert-room.'

'I do not see that,' said Mrs. Knagge; 'actresses and singers do not set themselves up as teachers.'

'Then do you find anything objectionable in women writing, as so many do, works on educational and ethical subjects ?'

'Oh, no, that is quite a different matter ; no one denies that writing for the press is quite within a woman's province.'

'Does it not seem rather a subtle distinction this, that teaching or publicity are in themselves not in the least objectionable, but in conjunction deserve the strongest reprobation ? That a woman may, in fact, open her mouth to sing nonsense in public, but on no account to talk sense.'

'What is worth hearing,' said Professor Wray, 'is worth hearing, the fact of a speaker's being a man or woman does not make it so. For my part, I cannot see why a silly man should be allowed to have his say in lecture-room or pulpit, and a wise and thoughtful woman be enjoined in every case to keep silence.'

'We shall look in vain for consistency amongst our opponents,' said Mrs. Silverton; 'for instance, the clergy, who as a body profess the greatest horror of women's assuming the position of religious guides, do not upon occasion scruple to avail themselves of a woman's sermon to eke out their scanty resources; they do not object so much to her knowledge being made available as to her getting any credit for it.'

'Is not that rather a rash statement of yours, my dear, about the clergy?' asked Miss Wynter.

'It is the most undeniable of facts, auntie, as I can prove to you. You remember Gertrude Leslie, Madeline?'

'Perfectly; but she left Girton, if you recollect, at the end of my first term.'

'I met her on the Capston Parade quite by accident a month or two since; she had come here with her mother for a fortnight's change; we had some talks together after that. I had not heard of her father's death, and I fancy his affairs must have been much involved, for there appears to be very little left, and I found that Gertrude had taken to writing more for money, I think, than pleasure. And what do you think she writes? Sermons principally. She has undertaken, for a certain price, to supply a publisher with two or three weekly. You remember she was always very conscientious in her work, and I assure you she is getting quite a profound theologian under the process of reading and digesting the *Fathers of the Church*, or whatever it is she feels it her duty to study. The said sermons are not printed, but written on regulation paper, and sold retail in manuscript. The conclusion is obvious.'*

* This is no fancy statement: a writer of such sermons was known to the author, though the preachers of them were not.

'I suppose,' said Madeline, 'that there must be some clergymen whose consciences will allow them to preach sermons that are not their own, for if there were no demand it would not pay a publisher to keep a supply. It does not seem to be exactly an honest proceeding, though.'

'They think, probably,' replied her friend, 'that a good second-hand discourse is likely to be more profitable to their hearers than a bad original, or, like the clergyman in *Punch*, they feel that a thing they have bought and paid for becomes undoubtedly their own.'

CHAPTER VI.

Πρεσβυτάτην δὲ θύγατρ' εἶχε ξανθὴν Ἀγαμήδην,
Ἣ τόσα φάρμακα ᾔδη, ὅσα τρέφει εὐρεῖα χθών.

Iliad xi. 739.

'His eldest born hight Agamede with golden hair
A leech was she, and well she knew all herbs on ground that grow.'

Professor Blackie's *Translation.*

'. . . . Whoso cures the plague
Though twice a woman shall be called a leech.'

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh.*

'We do not understand why a working woman of full age should not have the same liberty as an operative as an adult man.'

Times, Feb. 13th, 1878.

'It is strange that men should be so anxious to confine and limit the privileges of the companion who is avowedly the weaker vessel. The Liliputians bound down Gulliver by a million of little ligatures, but that was a proceeding full of sense and judgment since he could have demolished a whole army of them. But if it had been a Liliputian hero bound down by a larger race it would have been absurd.'

Mrs. Oliphant, 'The Grievances of Women,' *Fraser*, May, 1880.

'Parmi les progrès de l'esprit humain, les plus importans pour le bonheur général, nous devons compter l'entière destruction des préjugés qui ont établi entre les deux sexes, une inégalité de droits funeste à celui même qu'elle favorise. On chercheroit en vain des motifs de la justifier par les différences de leur organisation physique, par celle qu'on voudroit trouver dans la force de leur intelligence, par leur sensibilité morale. Cette inégalité n'a eu d'autre origine que l'abus de la force, et c'est vainement qu'on a essayé depuis de l'excuser par les sophismes.'

Condorcet.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (CONTINUED).

'I AM far from disagreeing with all the ideas which (as complimentary chairmen say at a public meeting) have found such able advocates,' said Sir Henry presently, resuming the discussion that had been momentarily interrupted, 'but I think after all it is only to be expected that, just or unjust, there should be great difficulties in the way of women's obtaining admission to the higher professions, seeing that on the one hand people will scarcely give them employment until they have proved their capacity, and it is difficult to know how they are to prove their capacity without getting employment.'

'The only course, I think,' said Madeline, 'is to quietly persevere; the more they do and do well the more they will be called upon to do, and the less opposition will they meet with from all sensible people; but I have seen something of how sadly paralysing in its effect (even upon those who feel that with a fair chance they could prove the contrary) is the common notion that a woman's work must be inferior; women naturally resent the injustice of being judged not by ability but by sex.'

'Their being weaker is a strange reason for making the battle of life harder,' said Mrs. Silverton; 'and it is singularly inconsistent to bring this fact forward as an objection only when high class or well-paid employments are in question, whereas women may toil in our factories, may work in the fields, may stand hour after hour and day after day over the wash-tub, a young girl may do the whole work of a large house full of lodgers and carry up long flights of stairs heavy loads that would tax even masculine muscles, and yet no one thinks she is here out of her proper sphere.'

'But,' replied Sir Henry, 'if you prohibit men from engaging in light employments such as you were speaking of just now, and most of which I grant might be more appropriately given up to your sex, I think in common fairness you should not claim free admission to all the occupations in which hitherto men exclusively have been engaged.'

'Before this question can be settled,' said Professor Wray, 'we shall have to define much more clearly than any one has yet done, what is a man's and what a woman's work.'

'What are your ideas upon the subject; I suppose even you draw a line somewhere?'

'It seems to me the only sensible conclusion is that such mechanical employments as involve the greatest physical labour should devolve exclusively upon men, the lighter, those which require most delicacy and finish, upon women, that each should do in fact without restriction what they are most capable of doing, while all intellectual work should be freely open to competition, without regard to sex. It is neither just nor generous that men should shrink from free and open competition and take advantage of their own political and civil power to frame enactments, shutting in the face of women, anxious to earn a living, the doors of all the most profitable professions.'

'It is curious to note the posts that have on rare occasions been filled by women,' said Madeline, 'not excepting the office of Grand Chamberlain, and that of Clerk of the Crown in the Court of Queen's Bench. There is a place in Norfolk, for instance, where a woman was once appointed parish clerk, because, it was said, that in a population of six hundred there was not a man who could read and write. Women, in exceptional cases, have been both soldiers and sailors, while I remember seeing it asserted in a note to De Quincey's works that many women, in order to obtain fair wages and freedom of labour, have from time to time, disguised in men's clothes, got their living as bricklayers, grooms, or even navvies.'

'One can scarcely be surprised at their undertaking even

work so unsuitable as this,' said the Professor, 'when in most cases you find, as we were saying just now, remuneration apportioned to the sex of the worker rather than to the amount or quality of the work.'

'*A propos* of this,' said Madeline, 'a literary man told me a few months ago that he was going to publish a series of manuals on popular educational subjects, but, with a view to economy, he meant to manage the business of printing, binding, advertising, &c., himself, giving some publisher a commission for pushing the books and for allowing his name to appear upon the title-pages. "Do you think women-printers are to be trusted to do the work as thoroughly as men?" he asked. "Certainly," I replied. "You see," he went on, "we think of employing them, as no doubt they would do it for about half the money." "That seems rather unreasonable," I said, "and, under these circumstances, I could scarcely venture to guarantee the quality of the work, as you would probably obtain only second-rate hands, and then cite your experience as a proof of the inferiority of women-printers in general."'

'The natural result of women's field of labour being so limited,' said Professor Wray, 'is, that such occupations as *are* open to them soon become overcrowded, and though their pay is inadequate, they cannot say as a man would, "Unless you raise my wages I shall leave." The profession of teaching is one that is always supposed to be open to educated women, but, except for those who have been trained and certificated, the demand for governesses is still very far short of the supply, a glance down the columns of any daily paper is sufficient to show this.'

'I heard of a case not long ago,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'where, to an advertisement for a nursery governess who was to have no salary, as many as three hundred replies were received.'

'I remember also some time since,' said Madeline, 'a clergyman advertised at the same time for a governess for his own children and a mistress for the village school, and though

any candidate for the former post, while expected to be a lady, was to receive a considerably smaller salary, for this he received scores of applications, for the latter not a single one.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Sir Henry, 'that the position of women of the better classes when reduced to poverty is very sad, but the parish schoolmistress, it is evident from your own account, has not much to complain of.'

'I am not so sure of that; it is the almost universal testimony of Government Inspectors, that women-teachers at least equal men in ability and success, and yet they cannot command the same salaries. I remember seeing in the *Athenæum*, not long since, two advertisments; a master and mistress were wanted for an important school in Newcastle, the most the latter could receive, including capitation-fees, was 150*l.* a-year, whilst the former might get 300*l.* besides a house, and yet she was no doubt expected to be equally capable. Even those women who, thanks to Mr. Fawcett, are holding superior appointments in the Post-Office Savings' Bank, are doing their work, I believe, for about one-third of the salary received by men of the same standing, and the same disproportion is to be found in every department of industry.'

'It is the old question of demand and supply, I suppose,' said Sir Henry.

'Exactly,' replied his sister, 'and so long as the supply of women-workers is so out of all proportion to the demand, so long is it the duty of every one who loves justice to do all they can to enlarge this sphere of work.'

'But, honestly,' replied her brother, 'you must acknowledge, I think, that though old time prejudices may be to blame, you do not generally, amongst men now-a-days, meet with any active opposition to women who are anxious to work in some hitherto untried field.'

'I know many men as unselfish as they are just,' said Madeline, 'who would scorn to do it, but I am afraid they are exceptions. Sir John Bennett was once mobbed, so I have understood, for advocating the general employment of women

in watchmaking; a few years ago in Paris a firm of printers wished to employ some women-compositors, but the men banded themselves together to stop it, and the idea had to be abandoned; only a short time ago at Kidderminster again, although velvet-weaving in no way affects the carpet-weavers, there was a strike of the latter against the employment of female labour on looms for making velvet.'

'The attempt to employ women in London as jewel-burnishers,' said Professor Wray, 'promised to answer well, some girls earning as much as three and sixpence a-day, but their master was unwillingly obliged to dismiss them owing to the jealousy of his male *employés*. In the potteries for many years men were so jealous of the competition of women-labourers, that they brought the whole force of their trades union to prevent women from using the hand-rest, which was of the greatest service in producing both rapidity and precision of work.'

'But they were not gentlemen,' said Sir Henry, 'in any sense of the word; I had not such fellows as these in my mind.'

'The conduct of the medical students in Edinburgh towards the six ladies, who, in 1869 applied for admission there to the regular course of study for medical graduation, was,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'much more disgraceful than that of those "fellows" whom you are, I am glad to see, inclined to be indignant with, and yet I suppose they called themselves "gentlemen," and anything but trades unionists.'

'I cannot help thinking,' said Madeline, 'that such men as these must have a sort of latent consciousness that they are themselves below the average, else why should they be afraid of women's competing with them, since water does not find its own level more surely than mediocrity either in men or women?'

'And yet they have the audacity more often than not,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'to bring forward the plea of women's incompetence against furthering their efforts to obtain work.'

'But we must not forget,' said Sir Henry, 'that employment being on the whole a fixed quantity, if women take to the occupations of men, the result will be the lowering of men's gains, which are often small enough as it is for the support of a family.'

'I think,' said Madeline, 'some better reason for excluding women from any branch of work is required, than the wish to keep up the price of labour by diminishing the number of workers. It is scarcely creditable to those who have had the making of our laws for some hundreds of years, that any steady and industrious class of the community should still with all their efforts often be unable to support themselves.'

'Besides,' said Professor Wray, 'it is a true principle of political economy that those who have something should be, to a certain extent, taxed for the good of the whole community; and so far from employment being a fixed quantity, we usually find that any equalisation of property is accompanied by increased production and more general prosperity. You might just as well exclude from industrial pursuits any other body of citizens on account of age or political or religious views, instead of making employment as it does now, except in the case of women, depend upon qualifications which cannot be decided save upon fair trial; there need be no fear that women will monopolise what men can do better, work is always sure, sooner or later, to fall out of hands that are incompetent; but, as Miss Acton was saying, it is just those men who have only inferior work to offer who are most jealous of their rights.'

'But after all,' replied Sir Henry, 'it is the man who has the household to maintain, and if, by increasing the crowd of competitors who are choking up the avenues to the most remunerative employments, you reduce the husband and father's already scant means, his wife and daughters are the chief sufferers, since he can no longer support them.'

'If wife and daughters had all learnt a trade or profession they would be self-supporting, and though what each individual earned might seem comparatively small, on the whole the

family would be more prosperous than with half its members doing nothing.'

'In that case you would impose a sort of tax upon bachelors.'

'They must find their level like other men, and if they cannot get profitable work in the old country, it is always open to them in their youth and strength and independence to emigrate, to build new towns, and cultivate new lands. They will find no lack of employment in the Colonies; in Queensland, for instance, male labour is so much in demand, that it has been found necessary to import South Sea Islanders to till the ground. It would do much to relieve the pressure in this country if Government were to offer greater inducements to both men and women to emigrate.'

'We very frequently hear complaints against the Government,' said Miss Wynter, 'and of its indifference to the interests of women, and yet many recent enactments seem to have been passed solely with a view to their advantage.'

'Never was there a piece of more short-sighted and mistaken kindness than that "Shop Hours Bill" and the "Factory Acts Amendment Bill," for I presume it is to these you refer,' said Professor Wray; 'there are no more grievous impediments to the employment of women extant. Why should full-grown reasonable people be treated as infants? Surely they have a right to a voice in the matter, but that is just what is denied them.* The policy of interference which animates many of our lawgivers allows women to stave off poverty by the help of vice, and suffers them to run the risk of starving from inability to obtain work, but having found something to do, they must not on any account be suffered to injure their health by long and exhausting tasks.'

'But you cannot deny that over-work is bad,' replied the old lady, 'especially for the wives and mothers of families.'

'It is, no doubt, but there are worse things than this; if

* Throughout the Bill to consolidate the Factory Acts, children, young persons, and women are repeatedly put in the same category as people who are alike unfitted to be free-agents.

one of two evils is inevitable, all we can do is to choose the least; the hardest earned pittance is better than nothing to the mother whose children's food and clothing depend perhaps upon her labour; if the supporters of these measures were prepared to maintain all these women (and there are many thousands) it would be a different matter, but as they are not asked to do this, and probable would not or could not if they were, they should think twice, it seems to me, before they put difficulties in the way of poor women earning such scanty subsistence as, even when free to make their own terms, is the best which in most instances falls to their lot. I am sure you will agree with me,' he said, turning to Miss Acton.

'Yes, I have often thought that this treating women of full age and fair intelligence as irresponsible beings, this refusing them freedom to regulate their own time, and make their own terms with employers, well-meant though it is, has worked injuriously by depriving women of free competition in those occupations which they have always shared with men. It is strange that the would-be friends of women-workers in the humbler classes cannot see that these artificial restrictions, instead of increasing their power of earning, their power of self-protection, force dependence upon them, put fresh difficulties in their way, and oppress instead of relieving them.'

'How is that?' asked Miss Wynter.

'The result of the "Nine Hours Bill" is just this, that it has led to many hundreds of women being dismissed from places where perhaps they were working ten hours a-day, but were kindly treated and receiving good wages, and has obliged them to take to a lower class of work (which, not coming under the Acts, involves perhaps twelve or more hours daily toil), while men are taken on in their place, or if they are retained it is to have their small salaries still further reduced. I know some firms of printers where, since the passing of these Acts, the women-hands have been all turned off; for, subject as printers are to press of work, they must be free to make special arrangements for extra time. In the smaller workshops, too, the busiest hour

is after nine in the evening, so the owners are ready to pay considerably higher wages to men so that they may keep their shops open as long as they think fit and avoid the annoyance of constant visits from inspectors. Thus women's earnings are diminished, and the stamp of inferiority placed upon their labour by their would-be benefactors.'

'There is a grim irony,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'in providing that women are to have a certain length of time during the day for their meals, when the very fact of this prohibitory legislation is to limit their power of obtaining food; besides, if long hours are so bad for women that the State must put aside all considerations of personal liberty, and legislate for them as though they were children, why confine their restrictions only to shops where textile fabrics or wearing apparel are sold? It leaves untouched provision-shops, public-houses, restaurants, lodging-houses, and other places where women toil, not ten, but often as much as fifteen hours in the twenty-four; whilst the home-life of most labourers' wives proves conclusively the truth of the popular proverb that "a woman's work is never done."'

'I remember,' said Madeline, 'hearing not long ago of a workman who had been very active in his advocacy of placing restrictions upon the employments of women; his own wife was of a reticent and silent nature, but like the historical parrot, she probably thought the more, and one evening when the husband returned about supper-time he found her quietly reading a book of travels. "Where is my supper?" he asked, with some alarm. "I never knew you to miss getting it before." "I tell you how it is," she said, "you are always a-laying down the law that women shouldn't work but eight hours a-day, just because you don't want to have them in the factory, now I got your breakfast at six this morning and worked hard till two, and that's eight hours exactly, and why should I work longer than them?" This put the matter in quite a new light, the husband, it is said, reconsidered his position, and after talking over the subject with his wife whom he had never

known to neglect her duty on any frivolous pretext, he finally withdrew his support from those who were advocating the interference of Government with the liberty of working women. It is strange, but I believe even some of those who recognise the want of a larger sphere of work for women, are yet short-sighted enough to believe in these Acts.'

'And so inflict upon them their crowning disability,' said Mrs. Silverton, like the generous Sultan, who, on the entreaties of his wives, was induced to allow them to walk abroad provided they wore strong shoes, and forthwith forbad all shoemakers under the severest penalties to supply them with the same.'

'Whichever way we look at it,' said the Professor, 'this interference is a great mistake; I hear that in many factories where women have still been retained, employers compensate themselves for the compulsory short hours by making the work harder while it lasts, so that the women are really more fatigued than under the old system. Plausible, too, as is the plea that the future health of the nation demands that women should be protected against their employers, it is clear that our legislators cannot think protection desirable from the labourers' point of view, or why, when it was proposed to make these restrictions apply only to married women, should they have refused to consider the same on the ground that it would prove a discouragement to marriage?'

'You allow that it would be desirable in many cases,' said Sir Henry, 'that the hours during which women labour should be shortened, but how is this to be done except by legislation?'

'By the combined action of the workers themselves; their labour like that of men should be free to regulate itself by the natural law of supply and demand; at least, the Government which takes upon itself to limit women's labour, ought in justice to prevent men doing the work of women, especially since it is the avowedly selfish object of a large number of working men to use these restrictions as a means for driving women out of their trade.'

'Whatever may have been the ulterior aims of their selfish constituents, I really believe the Members of Parliament who were most influential in the passing of these Acts,' said Madeline, 'were as well-meaning as those faithful Court physicians who, in their anxiety about the King's digestion, starved him to death.'

'They are, perhaps, political homœopathists,' said Sir Henry, 'who, at least by your account, have acted on the *similia similibus curantur* principle, and held fasting to be the best cure for starvation.'

'If you can afford,' said his sister, 'to ridicule the collective wits of those Members of Parliament whose paternal solicitude has done so much injury to its objects, I hope when you take your seat you will vote for giving women liberty to judge for themselves what they want and are able to do; but you have to obey laws, my dear boy, this afternoon, not to make them. I know you are getting chilly from keeping so unusually quiet, we will go into the drawing-room and have some tea, it is nearly five o'clock.'

'It seems a shame to go indoors this lovely afternoon, but if my medical adviser thinks it expedient I suppose I have nothing to do but to submit.'

'Your medical adviser! Oh, you mean Madeline; I am glad our conversation has had such a salutary effect that your royal highness is ready on the spot to promote a woman to the post of physician in ordinary; if Madeline only had a diploma what an advertisement you might be to her; I am glad, though, that you believe in women doctors, I did not expect to find you so orthodox.'

'If your friend were a type—you are not supposed to hear what we are saying, Miss Acton—I should; but even were I to declare myself ready to put as much faith in them as in doctors of my own sex it would not be saying much, for I am inclined to share Abernethy's opinion that "the fewer doctors, the fewer deaths, the less medicine, the less illness," and to agree with the old writer who solemnly warned his generation—

"Trust not thy body to a physician. He'll make thy foolish bones go without flesh in a fortnight, and thy soul walk without a body a sennight after."'

'How very profane,' said Madeline, laughing; 'at this rate you will want to do away with doctors altogether.'

'No, I do not go so far as that, but I think our plan of making sickness instead of health a physician's gain a very bad one, the best of them are too much inclined to encourage *malades imaginaires* as it is.'

'Have you any improvement then to suggest?'

'Yes; if I had my way our "medicine-men" should be paid fixed salaries for watching over the health of the community, just as clergymen are for looking after its spiritual well-being. In some parts of China (they are a wise people) doctors are paid so long as their patients are well, as soon as they fall ill the payment ceases; it is astonishing how little sickness they have in those regions.'

'Are the inhabitants guaranteed against accident also?' asked Madeline, unable to repress a mischievous smile as she compared the speaker's 'prave orts' with the pitiable condition in which she had found him not many hours ago, 'for if not, it seems rather hard that the unfortunate doctors' income should be taxed for burns, bruises, and broken limbs, things they cannot by the utmost stretch of the imagination be made accountable for.'

'I've taken tea in, if you please, ma'am.'

'"'Tis the voice of the butler, I hear him complain,"' said Sir Henry, as momentarily forgetting his injured foot, he attempted, with his usual impetuosity, to rise; he fell back quickly again, however, with a smothered expression of pain which he attempted to hide by murmuring with closed eyes and affected accents, as though the whole matter was simply a jest, '"Died without the aid of a regular practitioner, such instances of death are rare."' This by way of retaliation for Madeline's last remark.

'We don't want an epitaph for you yet, please do not

suggest such a melancholy topic,' exclaimed his sister, as with pretended indignation, but real solicitude, she flew to his side. 'Really, Harry, you are disgracefully careless to attempt to walk alone,' but his only answer was to sit up.

'Give me your shoulder, little tyrant,' he said, laughing at her alarmed expression, 'and I will show you that I am not so lame as my arguments yet. Fancy Miss Acton defending men-doctors after the way in which, from all accounts, many of them have behaved to the ladies who are anxious to enter their profession,' he added, in short jerky sentences, as they hobbled through the low French window into the drawing-room.

'A stern sense of justice to which I cannot attain,' replied his sister; 'for myself,' she continued, as the rest of the party followed, 'I am not at all sure that I do not, for the reason you name, enjoy hearing you run down the doctors even though I know you are in fun; I am so angry at the mean way in which several of them have behaved in regard to the admission of women to medical degrees.'

'It is true,' said Professor Wray presently, as he handed the cups of tea which his hostess was pouring out, 'that there has been a spirit of trades unionism shown by a certain set which is anything but creditable to men of education, and so-called gentlemen, but there are many honourable exceptions to this rule; I have heard doctors myself acknowledge that with such aptitude as women show in attending the sick and curing slight ailments, there is no good reason for refusing them every chance to acquire the training which would substitute scientific knowledge for what at best must without it be a species of empiricism.'

'*A propos* of amateur doctoring, Miss Cobbe, in one of her Essays,' said Madeline, 'tells an amusing story about her grandmother, who, like many elderly women, had obtained no small reputation as an unlicensed practitioner. Asking an Irish labourer his name one day, he replied, "Och, and don't ye know me, my lady, and didn't yer ladyship give the dose to me wife, and she died the next day—Long life to yer ladyship!"

There is though, joking apart, always a certain element of danger, as every one knows, in amateur practice, and seeing that many women are born with such instincts that they are bound to be either doctors or quacks, I think the country ought to congratulate itself on the opening of the London School of Medicine for Women, which, if it does not show that doctors are developing a more generous spirit, is at least a testimony to the gradual change in public opinion.'

'But whatever attitude the profession, as regards its male members, may ultimately assume,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'it will not read very creditably in the medical annals of the nineteenth century, that after so many years in which women have been knocking at the doors of the medical schools, entreating for a training which will enable them to lead useful, self-supporting lives, they have only just, in this country at least, succeeded in obtaining a fair chance.'

'This change shows, at any rate,' said Sir Henry, 'that the prejudices you complain of are gradually dying out.'

'And yet at the medical congress only the year before last, though some of the profession were in favour of admitting women-doctors, the majority were opposed, while one of our leading physicians went so far, I believe, as to say that if any lady-practitioners were admitted he would walk out of the room. This of course was enough, but could intolerance go further?'

'Now women have a school of their own,' said her brother, 'we shall hear less, I suspect, of this active opposition, which has been, I fancy, in a great measure due to a dislike of men and women studying medicine together.'

'This has often no doubt been made an ostensible motive, as has the assumed dread of women's incapacity, but the real source of most of the opposition has been, I am convinced, just an unworthy fear of rivalry, no more.'

'I know one doctor at least who had the grace to acknowledge as much,' said Professor Wray; 'in fact, he declared that if women were admitted without restriction to medical degrees, his diploma would be of next to no use to

him; and as for the plea of its being unfitting for women to attempt the study of medicine with men for examiners and fellow-students, the commonest understanding should be able to grasp the fact that until they can get training institutions and licensing bodies of their own there is no other course open to them. Besides, I do not see how any sensible, right-minded person could consider *that* an insuperable obstacle; in Paris, at Zurich, the sitting side by side with men, where all were diligently engaged in the pursuit of science, does not seem to have been subversive of women's best qualities, their modesty and gentleness, ultra-prudery is never a good sign, the most corrupt are generally the most severe, which leads me to think that it is not the noblest members of the medical profession who have raised this cry as a plea for excluding women; the students who find amusement in questionable stories, or subjects not enjoined by the exigences of their profession, are likely to be loudest in their protest, because the presence of women in the schools would necessitate that tone of manly purity which ought to, but does not always, animate students of the art of healing, noble in itself though it is.'

'I quite agree with you in thinking,' said Sir Henry, 'that the profession of medicine is one eminently suited to women, but I doubt if as surgeons they are equally likely to succeed, from the mere fact of their wanting the physical strength necessary for many operations.'

'In this, as in everything else, science is superseding mere brute force; in these days of anæsthetics, it is skill rather than strength that is needed, and therefore I see no reason why women should not succeed equally well in this branch of the profession.'

'Perhaps; but I do not like the idea, somehow; it is true enough, I suppose, what, I think it was Lord Sherbrooke once said, that an Englishman shies at a new idea like a horse at a perambulator, we must get thoroughly accustomed to a thing before we can be brought to tolerate it; to be respectable, it must have existed a hundred years at least.'

'And yet I do not think the idea of women-doctors is so absolutely new,' said Madeline, 'it may be a revival, but it cannot be called an invention of the present age; for among the Gothic nations women commonly practised surgery, and is there not some mention of a woman-leech in the *Iliad?*'

'You mean "fair Agamede with golden hair,"' replied Sir Henry.

'And there is Agnodice, the Athenian lady,' said Professor Wray, 'who, for the benefit of her own sex, was so determined to study medicine that she disguised herself in men's clothes in order to attend the classes of the physician Hierophilus. Masculine jealousy, it seems, is no new thing either, for it is said her success was so great that she suffered much persecution at the hands of certain male doctors, who summoned her before the Areopagus, and accused her of violating the law which forbad the study of medicine to women and slaves. But it is half past five,' he added, looking at his watch, 'and if I am to get back by seven, I must tear myself away and not delay the walk to Rapparee Cove I have been promising myself all day; I wish,' turning to Sir Henry, 'that you could have come too, but of course that is out of the question.'

'Unfortunately, yes; but I can walk, I think, as far as the library door with you, if you will kindly lend me an arm. I must write a letter before dinner, and I shall never get away unless I go now. Perhaps you will give me some credit this time, Miss Acton,' he added, turning to her, 'for having been interested in our discussion when I tell you that, although my letter was rather an important one, I literally forgot it until this moment.'

'I really believe he is in earnest,' said Mrs. Silverton, as the door closed and the ladies were left alone, 'he has been so preternaturally patient and quiet for him all the afternoon; but auntie, I have been watching you while we were talking, and wondering, as you said nothing, whether you class women-doctors amongst the inventions to which you object, or whether you are inclined to tolerate them.'

'My dear, you know without asking, I am sure, which side I shall take; nothing I have heard yet has convinced me that women have a right to usurp the functions of a physician; their place in the sick-room is that of a nurse, and they ought to be content with this; why, there are hundreds of medical men now who cannot make a decent living.'

'Is no woman then to be allowed to earn a maintenance till every man in the world is provided for? But that is always the way, anything that offers no opportunity of earning either money or κυδος women are welcome to, they may be nurses and nearly break their backs in lifting heavy men in and out of bed, they may be in perpetual contact with the foulest diseases, and act as midwives to the poor, who cannot afford to pay heavy fees; but doctors—no, that is not to be thought of, it is quite unnatural and, in short, improper.'

'Well, I can only say it would make no difference to me,' exclaimed Mrs. Knagge, 'however many women-doctors there were in the world, I would not employ one on any account; I should have no faith in them.'

'I think,' replied Madeline, 'if you were only once attended by any of the women-doctors whom I am fortunate enough to know, you would change your mind as others have done; for although granting that the conditions of training and experience are about equal, there might not be much choice between the average woman and the average man in point of ordinary intelligence and skill, yet the very fact of women having had so many difficulties to overcome and the earnestness this has required and developed, must have, I think, raised them above the average practitioner of the other sex. There is no law to compel us to employ a woman-doctor if we do not like it, but on the other hand it is at least equally hard that those who from principle, or the nature of their complaint, prefer to consult one of their own sex, however much they may desire the services of a skilful medical woman, are, in nine cases out of ten, unable to obtain them. Many a valuable life has been sacrificed to the natural delicacy which, in certain

cases, has made women shrink from employing the services of a man, or if she has, at the solicitation of her friends, at last given in, made her fail to tell him all the facts necessary for a complete diagnosis of her condition, where she would gladly have employed and spoken freely to one of her own sex.'

'I should say it was nothing but false modesty that,' replied Mrs. Knagge, 'which the sooner it is shaken out of a woman the better; the question of sex ought to be entirely ignored in such cases.'

'I should rather say that it is only custom and habit which have ever reconciled women to the idea of men attending them in sickness. Modesty is often spoke of as a characteristic peculiarly feminine, at any rate men are not, as a rule, more than their equals in natural delicacy and reserve, and yet how would *they* like to be arbitrarily prevented from employing physicians of their own sex? How would they feel at being compelled in all cases to reveal their physical ailments to a woman? How would they like to be the subjects of an object-lesson (as women are every day at our hospitals) to classes of young women-students?'

'Of course,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'if their nature revolts at the idea, ours must surely have a right to do so. But, Madeline, I did not know you felt so strongly on this subject before.'

'I did not at one time, in fact I had not thought much about this view of the question, but within the last two years I have seen something of what women will endure in trying to hide their suffering in certain diseases rather than submit to the anguish and shame of outraged modesty involved in male medical and surgical treatment. About a year ago I undertook to nurse a respectable young woman who seemed to be far gone in consumption, and after a time she confided to me that the real basis of her illness was a serious internal complaint, the symptoms of which, in remembrance of certain past experiences, she had hidden from the doctor, who, of course, working in the dark, could do her no good. I began to

remonstrate, but she stopped me, covering her face and shuddering—"Oh, please miss, don't! I'm not afraid of pain, but I went to the hospital for it once, and if you knew you would not ask me to go through that again—I'd rather die twice over—I thought I should never hold up my head again." As she entered into further particulars I began to understand and appreciate her feelings. "But," I said, "if I can get you the services of a lady-doctor who is specially skilled in cases such as yours?" "I did not know there were any," she said, gratefully accepting my offer to move her out of the smoky town into purer air, and put her under the charge of my friend. I am glad to say that the treatment was quite successful, and she is now a strong woman, thanks to the medical knowledge of one of her own sex. I do not think any stronger argument than this is wanted to prove the necessity for women-physicians, this poor woman would, undoubtedly, have died, as many others have done, victims to their own reticence and—I cannot call it *false*—modesty; not only individuals but the medical profession and the whole human race would profit by the removal of every prejudice-constructed barrier against the free study and practice of medicine by women, who, seeing that they must have, when once prejudice is overcome, greater facilities for making observations and discoveries in this field than men, an increased and more widely-spread general knowledge of the diseases of their own sex must be the result.'

'But,' said Mrs. Knagge, 'when it was a question of men and women studying together, you insisted that the nobility and purity of science should raise the mind above any questions of sex.'

'True, where they are labouring earnestly together, their sole aim and idea being to fit themselves for the relief of their sad and suffering fellow-creatures, the question of sex would not, I should think, be very likely to intrude itself, though I am sure every one would agree that, where possible, separate schools are to be desired. But the case is scarcely parallel.'

'Certainly not. It has been often, and I think truly, asserted,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that the medical man who cannot banish from his work all personal ideas of sex is unfit for his profession. But you cannot expect the patient, whose knowledge of and interest in her complaint is the reverse of scientific, to banish from her mind all personal sensations of bitterness, pain, or repugnance; as M. Dupré said, in lecturing at the London School of Medicine for Women, a wish so reasonable as that expressed by many girls and women to be attended by physicians of their own sex, ought at all risks to be complied with.'

'And yet I do not see,' said Miss Wynter, 'that there is such a very urgent demand for them; in fact, I have heard a great many women declare, as Mrs. Knagge did just now, that however many doctors of their own sex there were they would always employ a man from choice.'

'The force of habit, auntie, that is all,' said Mrs. Silverton. 'Most of them have never seen a cultivated and able woman-physician; she is, to the majority, a new experience; and we know what that means, when conventional prejudices are at stake. And yet, when I say "new," we ought to remember that until comparatively recent times women were attended, at least in their confinements, by members of their own sex; it is the presence of men at such times that is an innovation.'

'Professor Wray spoke just now,' said Madeline, 'of Agnodice, and of the study of medicine being prohibited to women and slaves; I thought at the time that there are several allusions in classical writers, showing how strictly limited was the attendance of male-physicians on women.'

'Men-midwives are a disgrace to civilisation,' said Mrs. Silverton, warmly; 'I can quite believe what a friend of mine told me not long ago in speaking of this subject; there is no prudery or mock-modesty about her whatever; in fact, she is one of the most natural and unaffected of women; and yet she declared that when her first child was born, the feelings of horror and repugnance she experienced at having to endure

the presence and services of a man almost a stranger, at a time when it was especially necessary that her mind should be kept as calm and her spirits as cheerful as possible, if they did not endanger her life, at any rate retarded her recovery. Madam Romanoff, in her *Rites and Customs of the Græco-Russian Church*, says that child-birth in Russia is much less frequently fatal than with us, and I have often thought that this may be due less to the superior skill of the ladies who, according to the same authority, chiefly practise midwifery, than to the probability that the patients are, by the mere fact of being attended by one of their own sex, saved from much mental misery and disquietude.'

'I am glad,' said Madeline, after a moment's pause, 'it is beginning to be recognised, even in this country, that medical women are wanted; but when it comes to a question of India, there can be, I think, but one opinion. Where there are some fifty millions of native women who, debarred by national custom and religion from medical aid because they cannot obtain it from those of their own sex, suffer miserably and often perish in consequence, the case becomes urgent, and I am glad to see that it is beginning to be so recognised by Government.'

'That appeal, sent a year or two ago to the Queen by the Maharanee of Punna,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'has done much service in calling public attention to the condition of Indian women, and to the necessity which exists that there should be established in that country a medical branch of the public service, by whose means they may have the aid of physicians and surgeons of their own sex.'

'I remember seeing something about it in the *Times*,' said Miss Wynter; 'but I have almost forgotten the circumstance.'

'"Things happened in this wise," as the old story-books say; it being strictly forbidden, as you know in the East, that the inmates of a zenana should be seen by any man except their nearest relations, and the princess of whom I was speaking just now having for a long time suffered from a pain-

ful internal complaint, her husband, in great distress, sent two hundred miles to Miss Beilby, a medical missionary at Lucknow, to beg her assistance. She went, and the result of her skill and care was that the Maharanee ultimately recovered. Some time later, when Miss Beilby was on the point of returning to England, the princess sent for her, and solemnly entreated her to tell the Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the people of England, what Indian women suffer when they are sick. The Maharanee was convinced that if the Queen were only told of their condition she would feel for, and try to help them; so she begged Miss Beilby to write down her message lest it should be forgotten. "Write it small, Doctor Miss Sahiba," she said, giving her pen, ink, and paper, "for I want to put it in a locket, and you are to wear this locket until you see our great Queen, and you are to give it to her yourself; you are not to send it through another." Miss Beilby had some doubt whether she would be able to comply to the full with these conditions. But the Queen having heard something of the message, sent for her soon after her arrival in England, and I am glad to say expressed warm interest in the question, entrusting Miss Beilby with a personal message for the Maharanee, and saying she wished it to be generally known that she would sympathise with every movement made to relieve the suffering condition of Indian women.'

'That I am sure she would,' said Miss Wynter, 'but at the same time the Queen is one of the last to approve of women, as a rule, stepping out of their proper sphere.'

'That most ill-defined of terms,' said her niece, *sotto voce*.

'You recollect what she says,' the old lady went on, without heeding the interruption, 'in the first *Journal of Life in the Highlands*, "Albert grows daily fonder and fonder of politics and business, and I get daily to dislike them more and more; we women are not made for governing, and if we are good women we must dislike these masculine occupations."'

'If every utterance of the Queen were to be taken as divinely inspired,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'your argument, auntie,

would be unanswerable, severe though it is upon some of the noblest of our sex.'

'I have heard that quoted before,' said Madeline, 'in opposition to the earnest desire of many good women for a wider sphere of usefulness; but I do not think it is fair to take an isolated expression of what was probably a momentary impatience at a hard-worked and no doubt very trying position, and to cite it as a proof of the Queen's deliberate opinion in regard to the incapacity of women for such high duties as she herself has fulfilled in a manner which sufficiently disproves any modest assumption of inferiority contained in the remark quoted.'

'Besides, I am sure, during her whole career,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'no one could have been more rightly jealous of her royal prerogative; had she really, as some have tried to prove, thought it unfitting that a woman should have public duties, she would long ago have made the mistake of resigning in favour of the Prince of Wales, who, man though he is, few sensible people would venture to say could, with all his well-deserved popularity, make a better sovereign than his mother. But I hear Fred's voice; please excuse me, I *must* go and see what sport they have had. By the way,' she added, stopping in the doorway, 'did I tell you the other day of that child in the Board School, who, in his reading-lesson, would persist in calling the patriarchs "partridges," and was put into disgrace by a pupil-teacher for making *game* of the prophets? But I must not loiter, it is, as even you will allow, auntie, quite within a woman's sphere to look after the furnishing of the dinner-table.'

'Quite right, my dear, quite right,' said the old lady, nodding her head approvingly, and then turning to thank Madeline, who had just picked up a long row of stitches in her knitting, and was now winding up the ball of wool, which, as though with a sense of fitness, while its owner was entangled in argument, had been busy entangling itself around the legs of sundry chairs and tables.

CHAPTER VII.

'Human Nature is not a machine to be built after a model and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.'

Mill, *On Liberty.*

Ἴσως δή, εἶπον, παρὰ τὸ ἔθος γελοῖα ἂν φαίνοιτο πολλὰ περὶ τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα, εἰ πράξεται, ἢ λέγεται.

Plato.

'Let us once see one hundred women educated up to the highest point that education at present reaches, let them be supplied with such knowledge as their faculties are found to crave, and let them be free to use, apply, and increase their knowledge as their faculties shall indicate, and it will presently appear what is the sphere of each of the hundred.'

Harriet Martineau, *Letter to Paulina W. Davis*, 1851.

'I would contend as earnestly as any one for the domestic duties of a woman. I question if you do not cripple her in the performance of these duties and lower her conception of their grandeur when you teach her not to regard herself as a citizen.'

Rev. F. D. Maurice, *Spectator*, *March 5th*, 1870.

'The outcome of twenty-five years experience, thought, and feeling upon this point, is that I have been led to something more than a suspicion, I may almost say to a conclusion, that one principal cause of the failure of so many magnificent schemes, social, political, religious, which have followed each other, age after age, has been this—that in almost every age, they have ignored—often utterly, all of them too much—the rights and the powers of one half of the human race, viz., women.'—Charles Kingsley, *Speech at a Woman's Suffrage Meeting in July*, 1869. *See Report.*

CHAPTER VII.

WOMAN'S 'SPHERE.'

'It is a pity women are not contented to do their own work and leave that of men alone,' said Major Knagge, on Sir Henry's, soon after the ladies left the dining-room, referring to the afternoon's discussion; 'it would be—er—much more sensible if they would occupy themselves in learning their present duties thoroughly, instead of trying to change them for others. You can no more emancipate a woman in the sense dinned into our ears by the shrieking sisterhood, than you can—er—recreate her; her destiny has been established since the foundation of the world, and she only causes misery to herself and others when she tries to alter it.'

'But, excuse me,' said Professor Wray; 'before we accept that dictum we must first be made clearly to understand *what* condition has been fixed from the foundation of the world. Is it that of women in Turkey, amongst the Red Indians, with ourselves, in the United States, in ancient times, in the Middle Ages, or in the nineteenth century? for there is, I believe, some variation in the accepted definition of a woman's sphere at these different places and periods; and I must say, I find discourses upon this theme are generally about as inconsequent as that of the worthy magistrate who, addressing a sturdy tramp, said, "Prisoner, Heaven has blessed you with health and strength, instead of which you go about stealing sticks."'

'All sensible people,' replied Major Knagge, 'however they may—er—differ on particular points, are agreed that a woman's proper sphere is home, that she should be content to keep her own place, and not try to take that of men.'

'I must say I was very much of that opinion myself,' said Sir Henry, 'until this afternoon, but I was obliged ultimately

to acknowledge that there is much to be said upon the other side ; I begin to think it is not fair that a girl should be kept waiting upon the chances of marriage for a maintenance, till youth and energy are gone, and then be told that she is a failure, that there is no place in the world for such as she. In this case it is not women but unmarried men, I think, who should be severely punished as the bachelors were in the ancient festival, by being dragged round an altar and beaten by women for neglect of their sex.'

'Those,' said Professor Wray, 'who object to women leading independent, active lives, and talk vaguely of home being their only proper sphere, must be prepared to answer such questions as—"How about those who have no homes, who must depend on their own exertions and even provide for the maintenance of others? How about those whose fathers, though now in a good position, have not means to provide a sufficient income for the support of his daughters throughout life?" "Let them marry," you say, but how if they are not sought in marriage, or do not wish to become wives and mothers? Are they to be forced into that, or worse, for want of the means of living ; for in many cases it comes to this?'

'It will be, I am afraid, a long time,' said Mr. Silverton, 'before current theories upon woman's sphere become reasonable rather than emotional : sound arguments against her freedom to choose there are none, the most we hear is "I do not like the idea of women doing such and such things," or "It does not seem natural," or "My feelings revolt at the idea of women's working," or "Women are meant to be the ornaments not the toilers of a community" ; and it is really quite sickening to see the way in which modern literature, in a large number of cases, assumes, as a matter of course, that marriage is all but indispensable to the respectability, independence, or usefulness of a woman ; only the other day I came upon a comparatively modern French work in which the author declares in speaking of marriage :—"L'existence de la femme est là. . . . Le célibat hors de la retraite religieuse est un long

martyr pour une fille de mœurs pures. . . . Un homme, au contraire, peut demeurer célibataire sans *faillir* entièrement à sa destinée ; il a un état, une situation des affections, des compagnies, des amitiés, sans la mariage" ; again, "Toute l'existence des femmes est dans la mariage—Les hommes perdent au mariage ce que les femmes y gagnent, indépendence,"* and so on, I thought at the time, whatever truth there may be in this farrago is due, not as the writer implies, to natural conditions, but to the artificial restrictions placed upon the independence of girls and women.'

'Your writer is not much in advance of his countryman, De Maistre,' said Sir Henry, 'he declares somewhere I recollect, that the idea of a woman asking for a wider sphere is just as absurd as if his little dog were to clamour for a saddle and bridle that he might carry him into the country.'

'Precisely,' said the Major ; 'I cannot understand there being two opinions amongst men upon this subject.'

'Two *thousand*,' said Professor Wray, 'would not exhaust the category of attempted definitions of that mysterious thing "a woman's sphere," in fact it seems to mean practically anything and everything which man's caprice and prejudice in every age and country have assigned her. The Chinese—at any rate formerly—taught that when a girl was born she should sleep upon the ground, be wrapped up merely with a cloth, and play with a tile, she being incapable from her natural inferiority of being trained to act either virtuously or viciously. Their neighbours, the Japanese, have been making rapid strides, but in their national code of morality it is laid down (according to Miss Bird) that "The minds of women are as dark as the night and more stupid ; they do not notice what is before them," and so on. It is easy again to see what position women held formerly in some parts of Russia where it was the custom for a bride upon her wedding-day to present her husband with a whip of her own making in token of submission and her liability to chastisement.'

* *La Figure Féminin au XIXme Siécle.* Par Edouard Chantepie.

'It is too horrible to think of that sort of thing,' said Sir Henry, with a look of unfeigned disgust; 'but I presume that Major Knagge, in asserting the general unanimity of opinion on the subject of women's place in nature, did not refer to ancient or foreign ideas.'

'Certainly not,' replied that gentleman, 'what I say and what I maintain is, that amongst—er—civilised Englishmen, there is no great diversity of opinion upon the question.'

'I cannot agree with you,' said the Professor; 'it appears to me that many men's ideal of womanhood is pretty helplessness and dependence, their conviction that to do nothing gracefully is her highest vocation; a notion which has kept in a state of wretched poverty and unhappiness thousands of women who, with a wiser training, might have been contentedly earning an honourable livelihood. Others think that a woman who toils in the field, or nurses in the male wards of hospital or workhouse, is quite within her sphere, while others again who see no call for protest in women's singing questionable songs or dancing half-clothed upon the stage, or having their photographs in every shop window, yet think it subversive of all delicacy and modesty for her to stand upon a platform and speak quietly and sensibly on any social topic. She may serve as a barmaid, or sell fruit and flowers at a street-corner; only when high and well-paid work are in question does publicity become an insuperable obstacle. A woman who spends her life in ornamenting and displaying her person, in selfish amusements, or useless trifles, is quite within her sphere, society has nothing to say against her; but if, having time at her command, she takes up some earnest occupation and works for the advancement of any portion of the community, especially of her own sex, though a few may applaud and others silently approve, no words are strong enough to express the disgust which the majority feel at her unfeminine proclivities. In short, if you come to analyse popular prejudice against women stepping out of their proper sphere so-called, you will find selfishness is at the bottom of it; for

where do men draw the line? Not at what is really best for a woman's welfare and happiness, but at what they like best themselves; ignorance, innocence, and unreasoning submission are consequently often preferred to knowledge, self-reliance, and enlightened sympathy. Even Coleridge, who might have known better, held that the perfection of a woman's character was to be characterless, that every man would like to have an Ophelia or a Desdemona for a wife. Did it ever strike him to inquire, I wonder, if every woman would like to have such a life and such a death as Ophelia or Desdemona? Probably not, for those who would see the light of truth must blow out their own small candles. It is nothing but egotism and selfishness which enacts that a woman may do what she will so long as she does not interfere with the labour-market, or what we are pleased to think our prerogative of power; she is always within her sphere, I find, so long as she is ministering to man's enjoyment, but to be independent or self-sufficing is the unpardonable sin.'

'I have heard of a man,' said Mr. Silverton, 'who chose his wife, not as Mrs. Primrose did her wedding-gown, for qualities that wear well, but solely and simply because she harmonised with his drawing-room furniture; there was no mistake about *her* vocation, clearly it was to contribute to the decoration of her husband's house, a most worthy ambition for a woman of intellect. Jean Paul, on the other hand, wanted a wife who could "cook him something good," and I find a very large number of men share his limited ideas of a woman's part in life.'

'Miss Acton was telling me a story just now,' said Sir Henry, 'of a young lawyer in Philadelphia who, when told that Mrs. Coe was studying law and hoped to be in practice by the following Christmas, declared that he should never see her in Court without thinking of mince-pies and of how much better she would be employed in making them. "All I can say," said the friend to whom he was talking, "is, do not go into Court as her antagonist, or she will certainly

remind you much more forcibly of mince-meat without the pastry."'

'It might have been a wholesome lesson for him if he had been demolished in argument,' said Mr. Silverton; 'I often wonder at the cool presumption of shallow-brained men who dare to say of the sex which can produce a Mary Somerville, a George Eliot, a Madame de Staël, "let them, if they must work, keep to *my* definition of their proper sphere, which is to cook, darn stockings, teach children their A B C." And supposing Florence Nightingale, or Miss Carpenter, or Harriet Martineau, or any of the other numerous women who have given the strongest proof of their claim to leadership had, taking it for granted that the opinion of the majority must be right, sat down saying softly, with crossed hands and eyelids meekly lowered, "my strength is my weakness, my true vocation is to look nice, to be agreeable to men, needlework and accomplishments are my only legitimate occupations; woman is born to be a wife and mother, failing these, my life must be more or less a wasted one," how ridiculous we should think it, and yet they would only have been carrying out popular ideas of what constitutes a woman's sphere.'

'Applied to such exceptionally gifted women,' said Sir Henry, 'they do seem, of course, very absurd, the world could ill afford to have lost their services.'

'Nor can it spare the services of any one of their less gifted sisters,' said the Professor; 'it is only by freedom to seek knowledge, wisdom, and a true conception of her real place and duty, that woman tends towards her highest destiny. The fact is, men have grown so accustomed to rule and control women, to say what they may or may not do, that they have come at last to think themselves authorised by nature to define the boundaries of her sphere with exact mathematical precision, and to lay down an unalterable law as to her capacities, duties, rights, and social destiny. Can anything equal the egotism of this assumption of a divine right to say to women, "thus far shalt thou go and no farther; here is your proper place, if

you desire my support and favour you will find your happiness in the manner in which I point out, and no other"? And yet, with all this would-be infallibility, we have, in point of fact, no more inherent right to decide a woman's destiny than she has to decide ours; self-abnegation is no more a natural law with women than with us.'

'I must acknowledge,' said Sir Henry, 'that we are too apt while claiming for ourselves license to do whatever we are able, to think that women should be limited to what we think right for them; but there is one thing, whereas in former times only a very few exceptional women ventured to think for themselves, a very large number do so now, and I am inclined to think that the man who draws a line and says, "Advance beyond this at your peril," stands as much chance of having his boundary overstepped as the poultry-fancier who made a white chalk mark across the path to his garden thinking his fowls would be simple enough to take it as an insurmountable barrier.'

'That is very true,' said the Professor, thoughtfully; 'none but women themselves can define what belongs to true womanhood, and this only when they have obtained the same chances, the same freedom of choice as men; this is the only true way of finding out what is their proper sphere—the one most for their own advantage and that of others. The hand most fitted to do a thing is the one (whether man's or woman's) which does it best; and both sexes would much sooner shake themselves into their right position of mutual relationship if there were fewer regulations and restrictions which, while meant to improve upon nature, really distort it.'

'It has often struck me,' said Mr. Silverton, 'in looking into articles professedly treating of woman's sphere, how extraordinarily common is the assumption that she was meant to be a mere appendix to man; that collectively, if not individually, he is to be her master, legislator, judge, the unerring and all-powerful Zeus who is the arbiter of her destiny, as if she had no soul, character, or conscience of her own.'

'The average mind finds it next to impossible to grasp a broad, general idea,' said Professor Wray; 'and so instead of looking at the question of justice in the abstract, instead of asking themselves, "Is this, stripped of all sophistry, right or wrong, fair or unfair?" the majority of men begin by saying, "Do *I* wish it? will it be convenient to *me*? if not, what objections can I find?" And thereupon they proceed to stumble from one proposed difficulty to another, all of them more remarkable for lameness than logic, since any argument is good enough to support a foregone conclusion.'

Sir Henry glanced at Major Knagge, expecting to see him goaded by such plain speaking, and unable as usual to refrain from rushing with the snort of a war-horse into the *mêlée* of an exciting conflict; but the gallant officer was not without his little weaknesses, and with olives upon his plate, his mind for the moment was unable to get beyond it.

'But this selfishness brings its own punishment,' said Mr. Silverton.

'No doubt,' replied the Professor, 'as long as women are taught that a comparatively idle life is superior to one of honourable work, that their place is to be cared for and to depend altogether upon men; as long as a brave spirit which refuses to become the slave of conventionalism is sneered at as "strong-minded" or "eccentric"; as long as a woman's sphere of labour is so limited; as long as marriage is looked upon as a social necessity instead of a possible alternative, *so* long will women make men miserable in avoiding celibacy by contracting mercenary marriages as their only means of obtaining, as a rule, any status in society. The correction of the abuses of marriage is the starting-point of all reforms; but under present conditions, true marriage, which involves on the woman's part no subjection, and completes instead of absorbing her individuality, is rare indeed.'

'But I think you are a little hard upon our own sex,' said Sir Henry, seeing that Major Knagge was still busily engaged. 'Many men who are Conservative on these women questions

are really, I am convinced, actuated by unselfish and kindly motives.'

'The foolish Greek,' said Professor Wray, 'who, to save his bees the trouble of flying to Mount Hymettus, clipped their wings and brought flowers to their hives, no doubt meant well by them; but his policy was none the less short-sighted, for they rewarded him by making no honey. Seeing that it is not in our power to save the whole sex from sorrow and suffering, sickness and death, we ought, at least, to remove from their pathway all unnatural restraints which impede free action, and encourage any natural tendency to weakness or timidity. Plants grown in the shade are generally feeble and colourless; disused limbs are apt to become helpless; a child kept always in leading-strings will hardly learn to walk alone; and the same rule applies to women kept, metaphorically speaking, in a glass case, hidden away from all contact with the realities of life, they have no fair chance of development; the strife and burden of existence are only made doubly hard to those who have been trained to clinging dependence instead of self-help and self-reliance.'

'And yet,' said Sir Henry, 'women are so nice as they are, that I cannot get over a sort of latent dread that any change in them must be for the worse.'

'If you believe, as I know you do,' replied the Professor, 'in the blessings of moral free agency, the advantages of responsibility, you cannot seriously think that the substitution of independence for subjection, of a wide circle of interests and duties for a narrow one, is really hurtful or deteriorating. Those who fear that the removal of artificial restraints will reverse the order of nature cannot, I think, in their heart of hearts, have a very firm belief that woman's present condition is the only one for which nature intended her.'

'And yet it is very often argued,' replied Sir Henry, 'and that not by shallow, but by thoughtful, sensible persons of both sexes, that this perfect freedom which you claim would end in producing not good women but bad imitations of men;

that those women who fearlessly enter the arena of public life, seeking the same work as men, have too often cultivated their minds and sharpened their intellects at the expense of those gifts and graces which belong especially to their sex, that their very dress becomes an index to their character, is apt to lose its feminine charm, and approximate in a greater or lesser degree to that of men.'

'I am not ashamed to own,' replied his brother-in-law, 'that I once, in my ignorance, had some undefined, though very real fears in this direction; but it is impossible to know such women as your sister and Miss Acton and yet doubt that the highest feminine attributes may coexist with the fullest mental culture—tenderness with strength of mind, modesty with courage, broad views with reverence, good dressing with deep thinking.'

'Yes, I quite grant that in their case,' replied Sir Henry, thoughtfully ——'

'It may be so, my dear sir; it may be so,' interrupted the Major, who seemed to have just awoke to the necessity for some interference on his part, 'but certainly the—er—great majority of the women I have talked to upon the subject have expressed the—er—greatest horror of being classed with the strong-minded sisterhood, and deprecate any change in the—er—status which they at present enjoy.'

'Possibly,' replied the Professor, 'such sentiments are due to the very want of free development we have been lamenting. These women have not cut their wisdom teeth yet, they have not learned to feel their feet, and their opinions are something like those of the slaves in the Southern States of America who used to speak with the utmost contempt, I have been told, of "free niggers."'

'They know quite as much as any women need know,' answered the Major; 'and though Mrs. Silverton and Miss Acton are in themselves—er—very charming, I do not deny, some other women whom I could name as sharing their opinions are men in petticoats, nothing more.'

'No doubt,' said Professor Wray, 'the reaction from long years of servitude, dependence, and irresponsibility has produced some abnormal types of womanhood, and it is not to be wondered at. The pioneers in any cause—those engaged heart and soul in any earnest work—have not always time to consider the art of being agreeable. But when all is said and done (I speak from a wide experience) there are many charming and withal very womanly women amongst the most advanced advocates of feminine emancipation. Though two plants may be unlike in many important particulars, they are almost sure to resemble each other in their need of light and air; you may depend upon it freedom will only make a man more manly, a woman more womanly. As Thoreau says somewhere, "Men are always complaining that women are not more wise, women are always saying to men, Why are you not more unselfish and loving?" but until each is both wise and loving there can be no real growth. I cannot help thinking that a greater interchange of the best qualities of the two sexes would be for the advantage of both; the noblest man is he who has most womanly tenderness, the finest natured woman is she who, without being hard or rough, has some manly courage and decision of character. Women will not cease to look up to men, nor will men reverence women the less for it.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'though the natures of men and women may be parallel, they are scarcely similar, and therefore it seems but natural that they should have to a great extent different spheres.'

'Certainly, but this does not make it right,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that the one sex should legislate for the other in this matter. If you wish a woman to be womanly, in the truest sense of the word, it stands to reason that you will be nearer to obtaining this result by giving her every possible chance of free development than by fettering nature and creating false and artificial standards. The capacities and tastes of women themselves, as Professor Wray was saying, ought to be the only limit to the development and employment of their

faculties. At present, while a man's field of labour is bounded only by his power or inclination, that of a woman is shut in by a thousand legal restrictions and social prejudices.'

'And that,' said the Professor, 'in open defiance of the fundamental principle of true progress, which decrees that every human being, whether man or woman, has an inalienable right to the fullest development and freest exercise of his or her energies, that each individual who has come to years of discretion should without question be allowed to choose his or her sphere of usefulness. You cannot expect to get full or perfect harmony if you try to play a musical instrument with your left hand only, or if the bass overpowers the treble, so it is with men and women in all the affairs of life, co-operation is the only true principle of success.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'to follow out your metaphor—the treble has her own part, the bass his, they do not interfere with each other's work.'

'True, but both are occupied with the same theme. What I mean is, that by limiting a woman's sphere, by shutting her out in a great measure from the larger interests of life, by giving her little or no share in politics in government, in the higher professions, by ignoring the necessity for her co-operation in all the affairs of life, we have been just as wise as a musician who should say, "The bass and the treble are quite different, therefore the right hand and the left must not on any account attempt to work out the same subject on the pianoforte or organ; the best effect will be obtained by the treble gently tuning 'Home, sweet home,' while the bass thunders out 'Rule Brittannia,' or 'Die Wacht am Rhein.'" Those who assert or think that political morality and economy have not suffered through the exclusion of woman's direct influence, must have studied the subject superficially, or come to it blinded by prejudice.'

'And do you agree with this?' asked Sir Henry, turning to his brother-in-law.

'In all essential points, yes,' was the reply; 'there seems

to me to be an aim in distinctions of sex far beyond the mere perpetuation of our race. The one sex is the natural complement of the other surely, intellectually and morally as well as physically; and as no true home can be formed without the common aid of father and mother, so in no sphere can either the masculine or feminine element be ignored with impunity.'

'I have known dabblers in science,' said Professor Wray, 'declare its pursuit particularly unfitted for the feminine mind, and yet a woman's power of recalling impressions, her fidelity in detail, would be, as many eminent professors have recognised, invaluable in scientific research; in fact, I know of no branch of intellectual work which would not gain by the co-operation of women. The very existence of different temperaments in the two sexes proves it a most short-sighted policy to waste those valuable feminine attributes which are necessary to the world's progress, and whose neglect has already too much retarded the onward flow of civilising influences. There are some public duties indeed for which women are pre-eminently fitted, such as the authorised visitation of prisons and reformatories, of schools as government inspectors, to say nothing of the administration of the poor-law.'

'I have no doubt,' said Sir Henry, 'women are well qualified, indeed better qualified than we are for all exercises of benevolences; but ——'

'But,' replied the Professor, smiling, 'I generally find that by this is meant indiscriminate almsgiving, rather than well-considered schemes for helping the poor to help themselves. Yet it is in this work as guardians of the poor that women are most wanted; how best to relieve the sick and helpless, to bring some sunshine into the lives of little pauper children, to the bedsides of the aged and infirm; who can deny that this is part of the duty of every Poor-law Guardian, and at the same time one peculiarly feminine? Seeing that women and children form the majority of paupers, it is not right or natural that the board which controls and takes care of them should be composed entirely of men. What do they know about the

management of invalids or infants? What experience can they have had of the feeding and clothing of girls, or of training them for domestic service? A clever and designing matron could any day hoodwink if she pleased a whole board of men in these matters. The failures of the past, the mismanagement of the ratepayers' money, tell their own story. Women are obliged to study economy in outlay more than men, and their aid upon Boards of Guardians is much wanted in the constant supervision and checking of unnecessary expenses.'

'I quite see that,' said Sir Henry; 'but there is some difference between the duties of a guardian of the poor and those of the governor of a jail.'

'Certainly, but in America women have filled the latter office with great success; simplicity and effectiveness, I am told, has distinguished most of the work done by them, while their superior imagination has in many instances proved of the most striking advantage. We shall never, I feel convinced, have a faithful and efficient administration of our poor-law system, or a thoroughly satisfactory management of our prisons and reformatories, until they come more fully under direct womanly oversight.'

'I think the advantage of women-guardians is becoming generally recognised now,' said Mr. Silverton, 'for the number is certainly increasing.'

'In England, yes,' replied the Professor; 'but I suppose you know that in Ireland neither ladies nor clergymen (who are decidedly better qualified for the office than most other men) are eligible; nor even with us are married women allowed to act,* though I know several ladies eminently fitted for, and willing to undertake the work if the law would allow them.'

'The law recognises what a great many women fail to do,' said Major Knagge, sententiously, 'that whatever — er — vagaries a spinster may be allowed, a married woman's place is certainly her home.'

* [At least it appears not during the lifetime of her husband: widows are eligible.—Ed.]

'Her duties may begin, but they do not end there,' replied the Professor, gravely. 'Because some women are wives and mothers, shall all women concentrate their every thought upon this subject, and is it impossible for those who are mothers to be anything else? Before being a wife or mother one is a human being, and neither conjugal nor maternal duties absolve an unselfish woman from what she owes to humanity at large. Those who work most thoroughly are not the persons who understand but one thing; and as I said before, the whole community will benefit when women obtain the free and unrestrained exercise of all their talents. It is a curious idea that large interests and duties are only for those who have nothing else to occupy them. Mending, making, housekeeping, visiting, are all very well in their place, but they should not be made the chief business of life. When a woman has attended to all her domestic affairs, what right has any one on the plea that she is going beyond her sphere, to deny her absolute freedom to choose her own pursuits? the chance to turn away occasionally from the petty cares and worries, the close atmosphere of every-day life, wherein trivial things rise into unnatural proportions, and to seek in larger interests the rest and strength which every one needs, and women perhaps most of all.'

'It is very certain,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that no marriage can be a thoroughly happy one where the husband does not centre all his keenest interests in his home, and where the wife is so taken up with her household and family cares that she cannot with a spirit of fellowship enter into all her husband's tastes and pursuits; where, in fact, the man's interests are outside their home, the woman's bounded by it.'

'That is a state of things by no means "devoutly to be wished,"' said Sir Henry; 'but I do not see that a wife need sympathise the less with her husband's pursuits because she takes no active part in them. I would give women the widest culture possible, and I think single women should have some chance of an independent career if they desire it, but with a wife and mother I think the case is different.'

'If there is any real incompatibility,' replied Professor Wray, 'between domestic life and professional pursuits, or philanthropic work, it will take care of itself without providing by law against women attempting to combine the two. As a fact, in a well-ordered household the domestic functions of a woman as wife, mother, and housekeeper, cannot exhaust her powers, and therefore it means a sinful waste of material to insist upon her doing this or nothing; by "nothing" you understand I refer to the enormous amount of time (beyond that which nature demands in the form of recreation) wasted by the upper classes in amusement, novel-reading, visiting, dancing, eating, dressing, sleeping; by the lower in gossip, or mere dawdling.'

'I can only say for my part,' replied Major Knagge, 'that I should be very sorry to marry a lady-doctor, or lawyer, or merchant, or even authoress, to be known as Mrs. So-and-so's husband, and to have one's dinner and—er—one's home comforts waiting on the interests of her patients, or her clients, or her customers, or her last new book. What a man seeks in a wife,' he continued, waxing eloquent with his subject, 'is some one who will—er—sit gracefully at the head of his table, entertain his guests, who will, in short, make a home where he may find, find—er—repose after his struggles with the world, calm after a tempest. Her duty is to refresh the heart of man, not to share his toil and troubles, or meddle with his affairs; you do not love a woman any the better for being learned or strong-minded.'

'You have given us a very full exposition of a woman's vocation viewed from one standpoint,' said the Professor, quietly, 'but how about a *man's* duty? Is not *her* happiness in the married relation as important a consideration as his? She has as many difficulties to battle with, as many wounds to be bound up as he. It is not fair that the wife should be expected to do all the consoling; their attitude towards each other should be one of mutual respect, mutual forbearance, mutual tenderness; to bear one another's burdens should be

the rule of their life if it is to be a happy one. Indeed, I think the majority of men are much to blame here; they expect their wives to be always ready in season and out of season to cheer them and help them to support the weight of their particular grievances, but rarely are they prepared to take their fair share of domestic cares and anxieties. You declare, and I have heard others do the same, that you would on no account be the husband of a lady-doctor, or lawyer, or even writer for the press, but I have seen something of the home-life of authoresses, professional women, or those engaged in philanthropic work, and I can honestly say I never saw better ordered houses or happier family circles anywhere; indeed, I believe if we could get at the opinions of those husbands whose wives have some aims, interests, and activities beyond their homes, we should find each one congratulating himself upon his exceptional good fortune. A man with a wife who is a purely receptive being, a mere reflection of himself, loses all the benefit of intellectual friction; for intercourse, to be improving, must be between two active minds, not between an active and a passive.'

'I do not doubt,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that the higher the aim of a woman's existence, the more likely is she to perform the most trivial domestic duties conscientiously. In the first place she brings more intelligence to bear upon them, while the principle of thoroughness necessary for all who would succeed in any profession is naturally carried into the routine of every-day life.'

'It is extraordinary to me,' exclaimed Major Knagge, with some impatience, 'that sensible men can be found to support women in their revolt against nature, for this hankering after the pursuits of men is nothing more nor less. It is nature which has—er—created women's disabilities; both the pre and post natal functions of motherhood are quite enough argument against admitting women to men's professions, to—to—offices of State or whatever it is they want. "The trial must be postponed to-day, for Mrs. A., the forewoman of the jury, is

feeling faint, and the consequences might be serious if she were compelled to remain"; or "the—er—proceedings of the court must be suspended for a time, as the infant of Mrs. R., the leading counsel for the defence, requires her attention." That is the—er—sort of thing we should be encountering at every turn. Why, why—the business of the world would never go on.'

'Ridicule is not argument,' said Professor Wray, 'and satire is a weapon which needs very careful handling, or it will sooner or later prove fatal to the one who wields it.'

'And as you said just now,' added Mr. Silverton, 'we have certainly no right to decree that women shall or shall not undertake wider responsibilities than were considered fitting for her in the past. The compatibility or incompatibility of any particular duties should be left to the decision of the women concerned; their judgment in the matter is likely to be at least as correct as any arrived at by the amalgamated wits of our sex. No true woman ignores the claims of motherhood, and because they are already in a measure handicapped in the race of life is a curious reason to give for not removing as far as possible all difficulties from their path.'

'Besides,' said the Professor, 'a great many women either from chance or choice are not mothers, and I think it most probable that as society advances motherhood will be less and less of a tax upon women's physical resources. For one thing, pressure of population, as Herbert Spencer* points out, must disappear with all its attendant evils, since the particular kind of evolution which man is destined hereafter to undergo must cause a decline in his powers of reproduction; for another, when the rule of common-sense now gaining ground with regard to women's physical development has had time to work, the bearing of children ought to be as free from danger and long disability as it is now amongst savage tribes who lead more natural, healthy lives.'

* *Principles of Biology.*

'The duties of maternity are not considered a bar to the chief office of State being held by a woman,' said Mr. Silverton. 'Our Queen has shirked none of her duties as a sovereign, and in no reign have they on the whole, perhaps, been performed so successfully. The same may be said of her home duties as of public affairs, and there is no reason, so far as I can see, why other women should not fill other posts of less importance with equal success. Men are as subject to being laid aside by temporary indisposition as women, and yet even in cases where this has been perhaps brought about by their own imprudence, it has never been thought a motive for excluding them from political life or public offices. The very fact that during nearly half a woman's life she is no more capable of bearing children than a man, ought, I think, to be proof enough that she has other duties in the world besides those of motherhood.'

'And yet there have been men,' said Professor Wray, 'who have not blushed to ask what business a woman no longer young has in the world; it is only going a step further. To me, there is nothing more insulting, more disrespectful to a being of equal mental and moral attributes with ourselves, and indeed more refinement and delicacy of feeling, than this looking upon a mere animal function as her chief vocation; and yet many worthy people, from force of habit I suppose, still do so. I recollect hearing an eminent man in the course of a lecture some years since addressing his audience thus: "That boy may be a Wellington, a Shakespeare, a Bacon, a Cromwell; that fair-haired girl may be—not a Joan of Arc, a Vittoria Colonna, a Sappho, a Roland—but—she may be *the future mother* of," &c., &c. Her object in life was not to develop all her faculties that she might use them for the benefit of humanity, but to marry as soon as possible, and pray to be the mother of heroes.'

CHAPTER VIII.

'Among unequals what society?
. . . . . Of fellowship I speak.'

Paradise Lost.

'Either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will they grow
The single pure and perfect animal
The two-cell'd heart, beating with one full stroke.'

Tennyson, *The Princess.*

'Wherever man and wife are really happy together it is by ignoring and despising, not by asserting the subordination of women to men which they hold in theory.'

Charles Kingsley to John Stuart Mill, *Life*, vol. ii., p. 330.

'No reason then hath man to slight or flout her, who could not live in Paradise without her. The blessing was bestowed for the woman's sake, but the law given to the man; to him was forbidden the fruit of that unhappy tree, which set all posterities teeth on edge; not to the woman who was not then so much as created . . . . If strength alone must give the pre-eminence, let men give place to their horses, confess their oxen their masters, and pay homage to elephants.'—*Female Pre-eminence, or the Dignity of that Sex above the Male. An Ingenious Discourse. Written originally in Latin by Henry Cornelius Agrippa. Done into English with Additional Advantages* by H. C. 1670.

'C'est donc en toute sympathie, mon cher Dumas, que je vous félicite d'être venu courageusement grossir le nombre de ceux qui comme moi pensaient et pensent que le jour où la femme sera légalement et législativement l'égale de l'homme, ce jour la sera un grand jour pour l'humanité, sera un grand jour pour la civilisation.'—Emile de Girardin to Alexandre Dumas on the publication of *Les Femmes qui tuent, et les Femmes qui votent.*

'Cancel from your minds every idea of superiority over woman. You have none whatsoever.'

Mazzini, *On the Duties of Man.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES.

'The letter-bag, may it please your laziness, has just arrived,' said Mrs. Silverton, as re-entering the dining-room the following morning she found her husband, long after every one else had finished breakfast, still lingering over his last cup of coffee and his *Plymouth and Exeter Gazette* (the London papers not arriving until afternoon); 'they say there has been some slight accident on the line which delayed the mail, I am glad you will not have to go without your letters. Had you not better give me mine and Mrs. Knagge's, and distribute the rest after you have started; for the waggonette is at the door and if you mean to get to the Cresswell's by luncheon-time, you really ought not to loiter?'

'Bless my heart! why it is actually half-past ten,' exclaimed Mr. Silverton, looking at his watch, 'where are the rest of the party?'

'I think I had better go and see;' and Mrs. Silverton was turning away, when her husband stopped her.

'Now this is really too bad, Nellie,' he grumbled. 'Do you really mean to say that you are going to stay at home; you know I hate to go anywhere without you. I don't see why you shouldn't come with us?'

'I must really not allow myself to be tempted, dear,' she answered, stooping to kiss the pucker of discontent on his brow, by the aid of which he contrived to look alarmingly stern, 'let go my hand and finish your coffee like a good boy, and I will give you three full, true, and unanswerable reasons for my decision; in the first place, even though you are driving, the waggonette cannot be persuaded to take us all; in the second, poor Mrs. Knagge has a dreadful cold, and I must stay to look after her

—don't make such a face; and thirdly, though Mrs. Cresswell asked us all, the party will be quite large enough.'

'Well, if it must be so it must, I suppose,' said Mr. Silverton rising and throwing his table-napkin with some impatience upon the seat he has just quitted, 'I shall get back as soon as possible though. Ah!' as they went into the hall, 'I see Miss Acton and Professor Wray are there, and Major Knagge is already on the box. Here, Watson, put this extra rug under the seat. Good-bye, darling, take care of yourself as well as of Mrs. Knagge—there is no chance of our wanting the top on I think?'

'Oh, no, it is such a lovely day, and see how high the glass is. Here comes auntie, looking quite radiant. Now, Madeline,' she continued, as the two ladies, followed by Sir Henry and Professor Wray, got into the carriage, 'you must make the best use of those bright eyes of yours, dear, for I do not think there is a lovelier drive in the kingdom than that between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple; and so, if Professor Wray and my argumentative brother begin to talk of "shoes, and ships, and sealing-wax, and cabbages, and kings," be sure you recall them to a sense of duty by exclaiming, "Do you admire the view?" Good-bye!' and in another moment the impatient horses had their way, and were dashing down the drive, only just restrained by their master's strong arm and familiar voice.

'You seem to have been more fortunate than we are as regards the interest of your despatches,' said Sir Henry, by-and-by, as Professor Wray at length put down the magazine he had been reading.

'It is a copy of the *Englishwoman's Review*,' was the reply, 'not a new number, but interesting to me, as there is an article in it which I had not seen before, written by a lady I know. It is founded on three old tracts, published early in the last century, which she came upon—so she told me—almost by chance in the British Museum Library. It is a curious record of one of the many controversies upon the claims of women to

educational, civil, and political privileges similar to those enjoyed by men, which have taken place at intervals ever since the days when Plato in his *Republic* argued that in the administration of a State neither women as women, nor men as men, have any special function, the gifts of nature being equally distributed (*Rep.* 5); and Aristophanes, in his *Ecclesiagusæ*, levelled his keenest satire at women who aspired to a share in the Government.'

'I see,' said Sir Henry, who had just taken up the magazine and was glancing at the article in question, 'that the authoress of the first tract, *Sophia, a Woman of Quality*, plants her feet firmly at once upon the ground she means to occupy; and after the uncompromising premise, "Woman not Inferior to Man," proceeds to give her pamphlet the further title of "A Short and Modest Vindication of the Rights of the Fair Sex." The two qualities claimed, however, so far as I can judge from a hasty glance, appear rather conspicuous by their absence.'

'I have seen the original tracts,' said Madeline; 'I looked them up in the British Museum after reading that article, and it struck me that Sophia, uncomplimentary though she is, has the advantage in politeness and certainly in argument over her antagonist, the author of "Man's Natural Right to Sovereign Authority," who (on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, I suppose,) signs himself "A Gentleman."'

'Sophia's claim to complete equality of course meets with your entire sympathy?' said Sir Henry.

'How can it do otherwise?' replied Madeline; 'I do not know that there is much to be gained by asserting a fact that in course of time must prove itself, but meanwhile I cannot help feeling that those who hold women—as some do still—to be mentally, morally, and physically inferior to men are wanting as much in judgment as in justice. I have seen so much of the sad way in which women, who are forced to struggle with the world, have had their self-respect lowered, their energies blighted, their wages diminished, by the assumption, without proof, of their necessary inferiority.'

'And yet the notion is a very generally received one.'

'It takes most people a long time,' replied Madeline, 'to grow up to a height that will enable them to see over the walls of selfishness, superstition, and prejudice by which they are hemmed in. We are horrified to hear of the youth of a savage tribe being so imbued from infancy with the idea of a woman's inferiority, that as soon as he is old enough he gives practical expression to his belief by chastising his aged mother; we think ourselves, and no doubt we are, far ahead of these Hottentots in civilisation, but I have myself seen parents treat it as a mark of charming precocity when their son and heir, albeit the youngest and not two years old, has taken, and been allowed to take, some one or other of his little sisters' treasures, saying, "I a boy," evidently thinking this quite reason enough for retaining, in spite of them, whatever he has a fancy for. I have known eldest sons, not by any means exceptionally selfish men, who have thought themselves very hardly treated that not only their younger brothers but even their *sisters* have received an equal share of unentailed property with themselves.'

'Perverted ideas of justice,' said Professor Wray, 'are the natural outcome of our laws of primogeniture, and of many others which preach only too distinctly the doctrine of woman's inferiority, and which are themselves, no doubt, a survival of notions that have come to us from the East, where to this day women are treated as domestic animals with no soul, no conscience, no intellect. To judge of the Oriental conceptions of womanhood it is sufficient to note a few of their wise sayings, such as "A man of straw is worth a woman of gold," or the proverb of Vishnu, "A woman's virtue is founded on a modest countenance, precise behaviour, and *a deficiency of suitors.*"'

'But do you not think,' asked Sir Henry, 'that much is due to the influence upon men's minds of the Biblical story of the Creation, that Eve was formed from a bone taken from Adam's side, and St. Paul's argument for woman's subordinate place in nature that Adam was first formed, then Eve?'

'Very likely, but to be logical he might with equal force have said, "I suffer not a man to usurp authority over the beasts, for the beasts were first formed and then Adam."'

'But it is not so easy, I think,' said Miss Wynter 'to argue away the fact to which St. Paul also calls attention, that Adam was not deceived but the woman.'

'Which only makes him the more guilty, I think,' said Madeline, 'since in that case he sinned with his eyes open.'

'But consider the strength of his temptation,' said Sir Henry.

'Weakness is, I suppose, a legitimate excuse,' was the reply, 'but it can scarcely be used in support of a claim to superiority.'

'Ludovico Domenichi,' said Professor Wray, 'in his *Dialogue on the Nobleness of Women*, goes so far as to maintain that Eve did not sin at all, because when Adam received the command she was not even created, and therefore it is literally "in Adam all sin."'

'I remember,' said Madeline, 'hearing of an old woman who was very indignant at the leading place Adam is given in the story of the Creation, "And as for his naming of all them animals," she said, "I don't see much in that; why, I should have called a pig a pig myself."'

'I see,' said Sir Henry presently, as he glanced at the magazine in his hand, 'that Sophia's antagonist has a new and ingenious theory of the Creation by way of proving his own the nobler sex, "Man was formed," it seems, "a good, noble, and intelligent creature to lord it over this vast universe," so that he might have something in common with the other creatures, however, he was made of the dust of the ground, "but his Maker finding that alloy too strong for the perfection He designed to give him, extracted from the rest of his body whatever He found of mean, imperfect, and favouring too much of the animal, and confined it to a single rib, which had undoubtedly been annihilated but for the wisdom of this all-powerful Contriver, which is capable of assigning a use to

the most useless things." So woman, "this pretty expletive of nature," as he calls her, was endowed with a fair exterior, but so many are her frailties and follies that he is convinced—

> "Heaven took man sleeping when He woman made,
> Had he been waking he had ne'er consented,"

this is rather too bad,' continued Sir Henry, 'almost as uncomplimentary as the Persian theory.'

'What is that?' asked Madeline.

'They say that Adam being desirous of a companion in his solitude, an angel was sent with instructions to make a woman, as we read in the Biblical version, out of the man's rib; after having extracted the rib he became tired with his exertions, and lying down under a tree fell fast asleep. Presently a monkey espied him, and creeping up seized the rib and was hurrying off with it when the angel awoke and pursued him. The monkey climbed a tree and the angel had only just time to catch hold of his tail, one pulled, and the other pulled, and finally the monkey escaped carrying off the rib but leaving his tail in exchange; whereupon the angel thought the best thing to be done was to utilise his prize, and so woman was formed after all, not from the man's rib, but from a monkey's tail, "hence," says the legend, "her propensity for mischief."'

'Do you believe then,' asked Madeline, laughing, 'that women are the chief originators of all the trouble in the world?'

'Not exactly, but of most of the heartburnings, though I grant, involuntarily, and if I do agree with a certain learned judge that a woman is at the bottom of every quarrel, I endorse much more heartily the reply that there is nothing else in the world so well worth quarrelling about. I am too lazy to be any other than a peace-lover except under very strong provocation, but with such a motive I can well believe that even *I* might be roused,' and Sir Henry gave a half-comical, half-questioning glance from Madeline to Professor Wray who has just picked up a letter she had dropped, and was the recipient

of a smile by way of thanks, which Sir Henry would have done something much more difficult to win, neither of them, however, appeared conscious of any possible personal application of his words.'

'One of the rabbinical legends,' said Professor Wray, 'asserts, as perhaps you know, that the gentle Eve had a predecessor, named Lilith, who gave Adam so much trouble with her puzzling questions and decided views that he banished her from Paradise for venturing to maintain her own individuality, a fault for which the historians were not content with expelling her, but furthermore declared her to have been handed over to the keeping of that personage whom Oliver Wendell Holmes politely describes as "the leader of the lower house." In the early days of barbarism, when physical strength was everything, and polygamy was universally recognised, no punishment was considered too great, I suppose, for a woman who dared to claim equality with man, or even ventured to think for herself. Solomon, for instance, with his seven hundred and odd wives was not likely to have a very thorough knowledge, or a very exalted idea of womankind, or to believe in their having any individual character or natural rights; in fact, I think you will generally find that although he praises a virtuous woman, he takes care to let it be understood that she is an extreme rarity. Even Turtullian * who, as a Christian, might have been expected to hold gentler views, declares that a woman ought always to be bathed in tears for having lost the human race, and for having thus indirectly caused the death of Christ.'

'But if,' asked Miss Wynter, 'it is not meant that woman is to be under the authority of man, what is the intention of such words as those addressed to Eve, "He shall rule over thee"?'

'This utterance, so often interpreted a curse, may much more reasonably be held simply as an announcement of what should happen, viz., that the stronger should rule the weaker,

* *De Cultu Fœminarum.*

a state of things which existed as we know for ages to the injury of both oppressor and oppressed.'

'And yet,' said Miss Wynter, 'St. Paul and St. Peter also enjoin obedience upon wives.'

'True; but counsels are not commands. St. Peter, in addressing Christian women, was naturally anxious that they should give no handle to their enemies; and that the heathen husbands, as he said, might be won by the conversation of their wives. The apostles did not aim at being social as well as religious reformers; the aim of their teaching was to spread the knowledge of Christianity, and if they had tried to abolish ancient customs and prejudices, to do away with slavery or the subjection of women, they would in those half-civilised times and countries, have obtained no chance of a hearing.'

'I never could understand,' said Madeline, 'why obedience to a husband, supposing that to be binding, should involve obedience to every other woman's husband, why the advice given to women of those days should be considered suitable for all times.'

'People seem unable to use such common-sense as they possess in these matters,' said Professor Wray, 'they consequently fail to recognise that these are not theological questions at all, and if they were, there is nothing in the teaching of Him they follow giving authority to the one sex to enforce submission upon the other. There was a curious tradition current in early times, that Christ on being asked once when the Kingdom of God should come, replied, "When the male shall be as the female, and the female as the male"; that is to say, that although nature has marked out certain specific duties for men and for women, the more civilised the world becomes the more common territory do they find on which to meet; with whomsoever the saying originated never was there a truer prophecy uttered, for as men and women become more and more real companions, in *his* greater refinement and gentleness will be found the guarantee for her womanliness, in *her* greater strength, force of character, and

higher intellectual development, will be found the guarantee for his manliness. It is a great pity that while nature, as Darwin shows us, is always striving to equalise the sexes by making sons for the most part turn after their mothers, daughters after their fathers, society and tradition do their best to widen the difference and lessen the real sympathy between them by the cultivation of diverse qualities, as if women did not need enterprise, courage, firmness, as much as men, as though men could afford to dispense with delicacy, tenderness, purity, unselfishness, patience, any more than women. There is no special class of masculine or feminine virtues as man, in his vanity has assumed, taking for himself courage, ambition, dignity; imposing upon her resignation, submission, silence, self-sacrifice; saying practically, "I am a man, it is for me to create my own destiny, you are a woman, you must therefore take uncomplainingly whatever is given to you"; and yet both have the same wants, the same passions, the same sensitiveness to praise or blame, they both live the same chequered life of pain and pleasure, good and ill-repute, therefore all that is allowed to men should surely be equally granted to women; whatever is justly forbidden to women should be equally denied to man, for good and evil are of no sex, what is virtue in the one is virtue in the other, what is vice in the one is vice in the other; to make self-abnegation on the one side a duty, on the other to claim it as a right, is utterly false morality, especially when imposed by those who profit by it.'

'And yet,' said Madeline, 'how common it is to find people, who although they may not put their ideas into so many words, are yet very evidently of Rousseau's opinion that the quality of all others estimable in a woman is gentleness, a submissive and yielding spirit, that having without question to obey a being so imperfect as man, she may learn to suffer injustice and to bear wrongs without protest or complaint.'

'Fortunately for themselves and for us too,' said Sir Henry, laughing, 'there is not much fear of the majority of women erring on the side of excessive meekness, your Griselda is not

a common type in the present day, I think there are exceptions, of course, though,' he added, hastily, 'and no doubt the idea of inferiority carried to extremes has drawn after it many absurdities; for instance, formerly a census in Japan took in only men, leaving out women and children as too unimportant for numeration; the ridiculous assumption that women have no soul, or at least, that they can only attain an inferior paradise is generally supposed to be a product of Eastern barbarism. But I remember once coming upon a book in which the writer, commenting on that text in the Revelations which says, "There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour," remarks that you need little further proof of there being no woman there, and since charity forbids him to think, he says, that the whole sex has gone to a worse place, it follows that they are not immortal, happily for them, he considers, since in this case they will not have to account for all the noise and disturbance they have caused in the world.'

'These sly hits at women for their supposed love of talking,' said Professor Wray, 'are very common both in ancient and modern literature, even amongst the legends of the Creation there is one which declares that the name of Eve comes from a word signifying "to talk," because very soon after life had been breathed into her, there fell from heaven twelve baskets full of words, and of these, being quicker than Adam, she succeeded in securing nine baskets, leaving only three for him.'

'If there is one thing,' said Madeline, 'which provokes me more than another, it is to hear women spoken of in that way as a class, and summarily disposed of in some such sweeping judgment as "women must talk, they cannot help it, or women have no humour though they often possess wit, or you cannot argue with a woman, she never reasons, she is only guided by her feelings," just as if human—I beg your pardon, *woman*—nature were a thing to be treated in the aggregate with scientific certainty, as if nature, everywhere so varied in design, so rich in resource, so lavish of fresh forms, considered women of such infinitely small importance, that in their case to save

trouble one mould was made to serve for the whole sex, just as if 1,600,000 or more of human beings did not differ infinitely from one another in tastes, qualities, and powers; it seems to me this class of reasoning is no better than that of Voltaire's famous traveller who, happening to have a drunken landlord and a red-haired landlady at the first inn at which he stopped in Alsace, wrote down in his note-book, "all the men of Alsace drunkards, all the women red-haired."'

'People who argue in this homogeneous fashion,' said Professor Wray, 'show that their logical and intellectual faculties are only imperfectly developed, that their minds are, in fact, in the primitive condition which cannot think of human beings as individuals, but only in tribes; it does not require an exceptional intelligence one would think to discover that there is as much difference between woman and woman as between man and man, or between two individuals of either sex, and it is quite possible to see this and yet to recognise that there are characteristic differences which make the two sexes absolutely related to and dependent on one another; in fact, we want no better plea to establish, not identity of resemblance, of faculty, of function, but perfect equality, since each must serve as the complement of the other, if the two imperfect units are ever to make one harmonious whole. I believe it to be the absence of women's counsel and vote which has rendered our laws less just and humane than with their co-operation would have been the case, for in all things the best wisdom of the man without the woman, of the woman without the man, is incomplete; the two sexes being, as Benjamin Franklin aptly says, just "the two halves of a pair of scissors," perfectly effective when well-conditioned and working harmoniously together, but apart, or not properly united, of little value.'

'I remember,' said Sir Henry, 'seeing it somewhere, I think in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, solemnly asserted that the best women really like to be ruled and guided instead of having to use their own judgment in matters of importance, but I do not know that I am prepared to endorse this statement.'

'It would not have been for the advantage of the world,' said Professor Wray, 'if the best and wisest women in every generation had assumed that their unalterable *rôle* was to be always the humble followers and never the guides and advisers of men, many of whom must necessarily be inferior in ability.'

'I think,' said Madeline, 'it can only be ignorance of the real questions at issue which makes any one think that to claim justice and equality for women means antagonism to the rights of men, as if there could be any hostility in desiring to co-operate more fully with them in their efforts for the world's improvement. How is it that people cannot, or will not, see that the interests of men and women are identical, that a woman's place is not to lead the way as a superior, nor like an inferior to hear at every few steps the command "to heel," but to walk side by side with man as his friend and true helper, to receive equal chances, equal consideration, but no more, being on the whole neither better nor worse than he is, neither a wingless angel nor an unreasoning doll? There is only one pathway, I think,' she added, more seriously, 'in which women could not, and ought not, to walk side by side with men, and that is the evil one of war.'

'It is very hard though,' said Sir Henry, 'for any one with a grain of imagination or poetry in his nature to give up the beautiful idea of woman as a graceful, clinging plant, which takes its support from, but gives all its attraction to the strong rough stem round which it twines. An independent, self-reliant woman deprives one of all the pleasure of helping and supporting her.'

'These ideas of the mutual relation of the sexes,' said Professor Wray, 'are very pretty from a poetical point of view no doubt, but utterly false and unpractical when we come to the hard facts of every-day life.'

'No one,' said Madeline, 'can afford to be entirely independent, but the other extreme of blind reliance upon the judgment and utterly leaning upon the will of another is enough

to enfeeble any character; I am quite sure your theory has, in this way, been the source of much mischief to women, and I do not know that men either are the better for it; I fancy there is perhaps in one sense more truth in the metaphor than its admirers suppose, for however fair to the eye a parasite may be, it is no omen of health for the tree to which it clings; indeed, you will, as I have heard suggested, generally find the said tree inclined to be feeble at the top. But another thing,' she added, more seriously, 'I think if women are ever to take their true place they must get over the idea of a quasi-sacredness attaching to them as *women* rather than as human beings, they must learn where they are to blame, and to prefer winning by their conduct the honest respect and reverence which are due to nobleness of aim and action, rather than the foolish exaggerated flattery that sometimes takes their place, and which, though perhaps a remnant of the picturesque days of chivalry, has about it, I always think, a ring rather of sentimentality than of true sentiment, else how could such injurious laws have existed side by side with the most exalted and romantic professions of devotion?'

'The claim on the part of women,' said Professor Wray, 'to a certain amount of independence does not, so I take it, mean an ignoring of all reliance upon others, it only asserts that the dependence between man and woman should be mutual; that of equals, in fact, not of the tree and creeper type, but like the two sides of an arch meeting in mutual support, bridging the difficulties of life and keeping above them by each other's help. If they are to join in one common effort towards all that is noblest and best, they must be equal in position, consideration, education, opportunities, and freedom, to undertake whatever work they feel themselves best fitted for. It is perfectly just what you were saying,' he continued, addressing Madeline, 'that the one-sided theory of dependence is bad alike for man and woman, if *he* only is treated as a substantive while she is simply the adjective to agree with him in everything, the tendency in the one case is to crush all individuality and self-

reliance, in the other to foster any natural tendency to tyranny and selfishness.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, with a twinkle in his eye that belied his assumed seriousness, 'what does Shakespeare say, "An two ride of a horse one must ride behind."'

'You surely will not quote Shakespeare as an authority for sentiments he puts into the mouth of Dogberry,' replied Madeline. 'In a business partnership, for instance, as an example of voluntary association, it is not thought to be necessary that the one partner should have entire control, and the other be bound to obey; in fact, such a condition of things would be absurd, and is it not equally so in marriage? Do you think,' she added, smiling—'I know equine similes will appeal to your feelings—do you think if Mr. Silverton had attempted to drive tandem with those two horses, that they would have been able to drag us up hills almost as steep as the one we are coming to; or, indeed, to have brought us here with so little effort? I have had no practical experience in the matter, but I am told that the leader under such circumstances is apt to be troublesome.'

'As usual you have the best of the argument,' replied Sir Henry, good-humouredly, 'I see I must keep my heresies to myself, unless I wish to be severely handled.'

'I sometimes think,' said Madeline, 'that you are really more liberal in your views than you will acknowledge, that you are inclined to agree with us now and then even when arguing against us.'

'Yes, and no; I have not allowed myself to form any very definite opinions, but this I will acknowledge, that you have succeeded in overturning some of my half-defined ideas, and given form to others. But I see,' he continued, as the carriage stopped, 'tandem or otherwise, Jack and Stella will not have to drag us up this hill of difficulty. What an incline, an angle of something like 20° I should think. I shall be glad of ten minutes' walk, one gets so stiff with sitting.'

'Are you sure your foot will allow you?' asked Madeline.

'Oh, yes, I hardly feel it at all now, thanks; if you will

come too I will show what an apt pupil I am by adopting and exemplifying in my mode of progression the true principle of equality, neither lagging behind nor attempting to lead the way.'

'That is a great concession.' And Madeline, when Sir Henry jumped down and held out his hand to help her, looked half inclined to follow, but seeing that Miss Wynter did not move, while Mr. Silverton leaned back and said, 'You will see the view much better from where you are,' she decided to remain in the carriage, a fact that Miss Wynter evidently appreciated, and put down in the list of small personal attentions of which she kept careful note, and which were already inducing her to look with more favourable eyes upon the fresh type of young womanhood revealed in the persons of her new niece and Miss Acton. Theories, too, which at first had startled and shocked many an old-fashioned prejudice, appeared to the old lady less alarming upon a closer inspection; and although she still found it impossible to help protesting against notions that seemed to possess elements of dangerous novelty, she yet confessed to herself that if the times would not allow young women to be what they were in her youth, those with whom she was now brought into contact, with all their pronounced ideas and love of discussing every sort of subject with men upon equal terms, yet were in their intelligence, consideration for others, and absence of self-consciousness, an improvement on such girls of the period as she had met once or twice in society. It was evident, at a glance, that in spite of disparities of various kinds, the basis of a good understanding was already formed between the older and the younger woman, as the latter, in answer to her companion's questions, began to tell her in a perfectly simple and unaffected manner something of her life in London, of her visits to the hospitals, of her night-school, of the small musical entertainments got up in some of the poorest districts in the East End, of winter weekly dinners for little half-starved children, of summer expeditions for the same into the country for a day or longer, that the poor little mites for once in their life, at least, might

leave the smoke, and crowds, and dirt, and noise, behind them, and make acquaintance with what one of these small waifs described as 'the yard where the rich people live.'

'I must say I think it is very unselfish of you, my dear,' said the old lady, presently, 'to leave that pretty place of yours that Nellie showed me the photographs of, and to live such a life as this in town.'

'I am afraid there is no unselfishness in it,' and Madeline smiled at the absurdity of the idea; 'to tell the truth I like the country very much for a month or two in the summer, but I much prefer to live in London. For my own sake, I mean it really,' she continued, in reply to Miss Wynter's incredulous look; 'in the country one's life is not so full, one seems more or less to vegetate, whereas, as Charles Kingsley says, "A mere walk through the streets of London is an intellectual tonic." To me men and women are much more interesting than cabbages.'

'But you have something better than cabbages at Brancepeth.'

Madeline laughed; 'I did not mean that literally, of course, but I have let it to some very old friends of my father's, who are glad to see us whenever we like to go down for a few days or a week, and we have hampers and hampers of fruit and flowers for ourselves and for the poor sick people; if we lived in the country these might be sent up, of course, to the hospitals, but then we should lose all the pleasure of distributing them. Yes, indeed, I must not take any credit for unselfishness in my choice; there is always something stirring in town, the latest news, lectures, debates, concerts, new books, new plays, the most thoughtful and intelligent people always at hand if you choose to seek their society, to say nothing of the British Museum Library where you can find anything and everything you want in the shape of books; you see the limits of my philanthrophy.'

'I see that you make no merit of giving up three parts of your time to others, to—to——'

'To doing what I like, in fact,' replied Madeline, smiling. 'I cannot see that there is any very great amount of self-renunciation involved in that; no, indeed, I am no ascetic, not even a Sister of Mercy, I go about everywhere, and read everything and see everything I can, and, in fact, enjoy life most thoroughly, almost too well sometimes, I think, when there is so much misery in the world still unrelieved.'

'Your aunt accompanies you, I suppose, everywhere, my dear.'

'Oh, no;' and Madeline laughed, 'that would be rather hard upon poor Aunt Helen; I go about mostly alone, except sometimes in the evening if there happens to be a party, or a concert, or anything of that sort, she goes with me, partly because she likes it, and partly—well, I suppose, as a tribute to certain conventionalisms which one cannot infringe with impunity.'

'And do you really go about here, there, and everywhere alone?' asked the old lady incredulously, glancing with real concern at Madeline's graceful figure and strikingly pretty face. 'Is not that very imprudent? Why, in my young days, when we were in town every year, I never stirred outside the door without a footman or, at least, a maid accompanying me.'

'How dreadful!' exclaimed Madeline, *naïvely.* 'I do not know what I should do if tied in that way; why, even my little cousin, Katie, walks a mile through the London streets to Queen's College School every day just as naturally as she takes her breakfast. It seems to me part of a necessary training in independence. I do not think that a brave, self-respecting girl, or woman, need, in these days, fear to go anywhere alone, when you hear to the contrary, I cannot help thinking that there must be a want of these qualities.'

Meantime, Sir Henry had joined the Professor and Major Knagge, who were already walking up the hill. 'But how are your ideas of equality,' he said, addressing the former, 'likely to work in married life? you cannot very well have

two heads to a house; I know the theory is that husband and wife are one, but are there not always likely to be cases in which the question arises "Which one?" with whom, in any debated point, is the final decision to rest?'

'Where there is true sympathy,' was the reply, 'where both husband and wife are mutually respecting and prepared to make concessions, there need, I am convinced, be no such difficulty as you anticipate; the more nearly equal are the two sexes in public freedom and educational advantages the nearer do wedded love and fidelity promise to approach the highest ideal, for no true marriage can exist unless the husband is ready, practically, if not theoretically, to abandon those claims to authority over his wife which no legal support, social usage, or religious sanction can make any other than a relic of barbarism—

> "When mastery cometh, then sweet love anon
> Flappeth his nimble wings and soon away is gone."

"One man ruleth another to his own hurt," if injustice does harm to women it recoils upon men and injures them still more. Absolutism in the State or the family, in short, is out of date, and belongs to a lower state of society.'

'You may be right,' replied Sir Henry, 'but still there is no doubt that both the law and the Church support a man's claim to the chief authority.'

'No doubt, but none the less am I convinced of its falseness; society amongst the educated classes is practically in these matters far in advance both of Church and State, but the law follows suit, witness the recent Married Women's Property Act; and that the Church itself is forced in some measure to keep up with the times is proved by the change which has taken place in the attitude of the clergy with regard to women's education since the days when Bishop Burnet prevented the founding of a woman's college proposed by Mary Astell, and regarded with some favour by Queen Anne. As with science, clericalism began by ignoring its discoveries and

persecuting its exponents, but now bends all its efforts towards bringing its creeds into harmony with scientific teachings; so, since thoughtful men and women have begun to say, "if your Bible and your Church preach the subordination of one half of the human race to the other, I will have none of them," religious teachers have wisely reconsidered their position, and many of them not worthy to hold the candle to such men as Kingsley, or Stanley, or Wilberforce, are yet beginning to recognise that to preserve their own vitality it will be necessary to enlarge their borders.'

'You are severe.'

'Not more so, I think, than the occasion warrants. If the majority of bishops and Church dignitaries held far-sighted and liberal-minded views upon this question, do you think the Prayer-book version of the Marriage Service would have remained to this day unrevised? Some portions of it, no doubt, are very beautiful and poetical, while others may have been less unsuited to the times in which it was compiled than to the present day, but until we have an expurgated edition of the Marriage Service, as we have of the early dramatists, it will certainly sink more and more in the estimation of all right-minded people who are not in the habit of thinking by proxy. I had the unspeakable blessing for one short year,' continued Professor Wray, in a low tone and with an altered manner—Major Knagge had stayed behind to take a piece of gravel from his boot—'to share the deepest feelings and innermost thoughts of one of the brightest, noblest, and tenderest women that ever breathed, it was from her I learnt what many of her sex feel about these matters.' Sir Henry was surprised, he did not know that Professor Wray had ever married, but his only reply was to lay his hand for a moment sympathetically upon the arm of his companion, who presently went on—'Do you think it can be either pleasant or profitable to a modest, reserved woman, in whose eyes I believe marriage almost invariably appears as a sort of ideal state, the union of twin-souls, to hear it declared in the presence of a large con-

gregation that its chief end is "the procreation of children," and by way of motive for her marrying that she does not "possess the gift of continence," such language which has not (in the woman's case at least) the merit of truth to palliate its coarseness is a disgrace to our so-called "advanced" civilisation?'

'It never struck me in that light before,' replied Sir Henry, 'but I believe we often from sheer indolence go on accepting, or, at least, tolerating customs which our finer instincts shrink from, simply and solely because we have become used to them; but really, as you say, that sort of thing is only fit to be classed with some of the unseemly marriage customs of the Middle Ages, such as our forefathers, I suppose, found amusing, but which we should not for a moment tolerate.'

'Then again,' said Professor Wray, 'it can hardly be a source of pleasure to most women or to a man of small means, whose loyalty and love for his bride do not take the form of desiring a large family, to be told that his "wife shall be as a fruitful vine, his children like the olive-branches," to be expected to pray, and the congregation with them that they may "be fruitful and multiply."'

'These ideas, of course,' said Sir Henry, 'have come down to us from patriarchal times, when to have no children was a disgrace and humiliation; but what do you mean by the "falseness" of certain portions of the service?'

'I mean that for centuries bridegroom after bridegroom was made solemnly to endow his bride with all his worldly goods, and that this was a mere parody of the real state of affairs, the law reversing their position and instead of enriching her, making marriage literally a confiscation of everything she possessed, all her goods, even to her very wedding-presents, becoming absolutely the property of the husband to do exactly what he pleased with it, the only thing she could claim from him being a bare maintenance. It is only lately, as you know, that married women have had any control over their own money or earnings, and even now they have legally

none over their own person or children. It says a great deal, I think, for the high moral instinct of our women, something perhaps also for their want of thought, that so few have deliberately preferred a less binding contract to that of marriage, seeing the disabilities it has entailed.'

'I remember,' said Sir Henry, 'reading in some American work upon slavery, that when on the emancipation of the negroes in that country, men and women who had been living together were urged to marry legally, the women, with tears in their eyes protested, "We don't want to be married, because when we are married in church our husbands treat us just as ole massa used to, and whip us, but when we ain't married in church they knows if they does we go and lief 'em"; while the men said, "They earns jest as much as we does, and then goes and spends it without so much as sayin' by yer leave—now we want 'em married in the church caus' then we makes 'em mind."'

'It did not take these poor darkies long,' said Professor Wray, 'to learn the lesson of inequality and tyranny from which they themselves had suffered, and which had been equally under the protection of Church and State.'

'I cannot—er—understand,' said Major Knagge, who had joined them a few moments before, 'your being so indignant at certain portions of the Marriage Service, while you—er—advocate women's studying the classics and getting their minds imbued with the filth of old civilisation, which is—er—quite—quite—sufficient to destroy the modesty of any woman.'

'Do you then think it impossible,' asked the Professor, 'to learn Greek and Latin without assimilating the most unwholesome portions of Ovid, of Juvenal, or Aristophanes? You might on the same principle prohibit German for fear of their seeing and understanding some passages in Goëthe, or French lest they should come across certain works of Zola or De Balzac, or Italian in like fear of Boccacio's *Decameron*.'

'Oh, I am not—er—concerned to uphold those portions of the Marriage Service which you condemn,' said Major Knagge,

ingeniously shifting his ground; 'but I do think the exhortation to a woman to obey and serve her husband, and the exaction of a promise from her that she will do so, are as much needed now as ever they were; a woman will be—er—either tyrant or slave, if you treat her as an equal she will become your judge, there is no—no middle course, if we wish to be—er—free we must keep her in subjection; besides you cannot do away with the fact that St. Paul says distinctly, and without mincing the matter, "wives obey your husbands."'

'He also says with equal distinctness,' replied Professor Wray, '"slaves obey your masters," a text formerly much quoted by the upholders of slavery; but as I was saying the other day, the apostles were no crusaders against existing social institutions, they found certain men in a state of bondage, they found all women in a state of subjection, and framed their counsels accordingly.'

'But subordination is natural to a woman,' said Major Knagge, 'the fact of their having remained in subjection so long proves it.'

'It has been said many times,' was the reply, 'that slaves had a natural gift for servitude; but it stands to reason that no human being not intended to govern him- or herself would have been endowed with the power of self-government.'

'To a certain extent I think you are right,' said Sir Henry; 'no man having the respect he ought to feel for his wife would assume supreme rule over her in all the affairs of life; but at the same time it seems natural that the money getter, the worker, should be considered the head of the household and have a certain authority.'

'I do not see the basis of this claim; are there not two workers in their common life, has she not the anxieties and cares of housekeeping, the management and dispensing of their common earnings? you might just as well say that those who administer the finances of a country are inferior to the tax-paying community; but I see the carriage is waiting and we shall have to adjourn our discussion.'

'Why should we not walk the rest of the way?' said Major Knagge, 'I know the house, it is just the other side of Barnstaple, not more than two miles further; if we go across the fields we shall be there almost as soon as they will,' so while Sir Henry whose ankle, though he made light of it, was still apt to give in occasionally, resumed his seat in the waggonette, his companions, leaving him to explain matters, turned off into a cross-road and in a very few minutes had taken up the dropped threads of their discourse, for the Major, though dialectics were not his strong point, loved a controversy none the less. 'As I said just now,' he resumed, 'the fact of women having from—er—time immemorial remained in a subordinate position is proof sufficient of their—er—I may say inferiority.'

'Rather I should think,' replied the Professor, 'of the prejudice, superstition, and selfishness of men; but thank heaven we are growing year by year further away from those early ages of human history when the perpetual struggle for existence made it necessary that men, having to bear the brunt of the battle against physical dangers and difficulties, necessarily assumed a more important position. I believe that just as the majority of people now ridicule the crude ideas of past times in regard to women's education, so our grandchildren will smile at the notions still generally current upon questions dealing with women's civil and political status, their supposed unalterably fixed "proper sphere."'

'All I know is,' replied Major Knagge, 'that if women go on asserting themselves and claiming equality, they will lose a great deal more than they gain, we show deference to—to their weakness, not to their strength.'

'Deference to be worth anything,' said Professor Wray, 'should be given, not out of pity but respect; no doubt, childish helplessness and dependence on the part of a woman is very flattering to a man's pride, but she whose companionship will raise and profit him is the woman who retains to the fullest her self-reliance and self-respect.'

'I do not think so,' replied the Major, 'and it seems to me that women, instead of complaining of their subordinate position, ought to be grateful for their safe and sheltered position, for the care which saves them from a publicity and — er — responsibility, that could only be hurtful to themselves and others. I maintain that a woman's chief strength, if she only knew it, is in her weakness.'

'I have heard that saying before, but I must beg leave to doubt its truth; if you look at facts do you find in any of our large cities that an attractive girl because she is innocent and ignorant, poor or friendless, is on that account the safer? Alas! to the disgrace of our sex be it spoken—No. Read in any paper you choose to take up, the police reports of wives dragged by the hair, kicked, beaten to death by those who have vowed to love and cherish them, where is *their* "safe and sheltered sphere?" Is *their* legal and physical weakness a source of strength?'

'If it comes to that, the wife is as often as not to blame.'

'It may be so, I do not assert with some philogynists that women are perfect beings or even of a higher type than men, and I have no desire to see my own sex abdicate altogether in their favour as they are supposed to have done in that amusing but somewhat shallow book the *Revolt of Man*, that would be quite as bad as the old *régime*, but I do maintain that in nothing except physical strength, for which they have compensating qualities, can women justly be considered inferior to men.'

'It seems to me,' replied Major Knagge, 'that in this—er —very fact lies the refutation of all and every claim on a woman's part to equality, they never were, never are, and never will be our equals in strength.'

'Did you ever hear,' said Professor Wray, 'of the beautiful Cymburga, wife of Duke Ernest of Austria, who could crack hard nuts with her fingers, or drive in nails with her hand as though it had been a hammer, or of the fair Brunhilda who bound her offending lover with her girdle and slung him up to a beam in the ceiling?'

'But these are exceptional cases; the rule remains the same that the weakest man is stronger than the strongest woman.'

'You remind me,' said the Professor, 'of a true story I once heard about a well known lady-physician; on one occasion when she was quite a young girl, a gentleman and his wife who were on intimate terms with the family were spending the evening with her parents, when the conversation turned upon the relative strength of men and women. Mr. X., a small man, who was rather inclined to overrate the power of his muscles, asserted that not only was the male sex as a whole stronger, a proposition not to be questioned, but that the weakest man was stronger than the strongest woman. "That must be a mistake, for Elizabeth," exclaimed her brothers, "is, when she chooses to exert her strength, more than a match for either of us in wrestling or lifting, and can carry either of us about with perfect ease." "She could not lift *me*, no woman living could lift me," replied Mr. X., with contemptuous incredulity. "Do try it," he continued, turning to the girl and settling himself resolutely into his seat, with feet pressed firmly on the floor. "Do your utmost. I defy you to move me out of my chair!" Thus challenged, Elizabeth walked slowly across the room, lifted Mr. X. from his chair, seated him on her left arm, and holding him firmly with the other, walked three times around the room with the utmost deliberation, and as she replaced him in his chair, quietly remarked amidst an outburst of irrepressible merriment in which the visitors heartily joined, "You see Mr. X., that some women are quite as strong as some men."'

'Such women are unnatural specimens of their sex,' said Major Knagge, 'no one in their senses ever thinks of denying that—that—the great body of the sex are infinitely our inferiors in physical strength.'

'And as a rule in nervous organization they are as infinitely our superiors; if men have more capacity for exertion, women possess more endurance; an athlete in perfect training

could scarcely bear sitting up night after night for the best part of a week with a refractory patient, as many a woman has done; the same equality in difference of supplemental qualities runs all through the mental and physical nature of the two sexes. It strikes me as a curious instance of men's injustice, that those who are most emphatic in their assertions of women's inherent feebleness are the very ones to put difficulties in their path towards self-development; they bind up a healthy limb until it has nearly withered, and then say nature has made it weak and helpless; while approving of athletic sports and muscular exercises for boys they protest against giving girls the same chance of physical development. But those men who base their claim to superiority upon mere strength of muscle, are condemning the best laws of the most civilised countries, whose object is to protect the weak and restrain the powerful, to recognise as their vital principle the claim of right, irrespective of might.'

'But however we may turn and twist—er—the facts of the case, I do not see how we are to get over the simple truth that muscle always has and always will rule in the end.'

'Indeed; and what horse-power would be your standard of influence? If you come to that, women engaged in hard or outdoor labour develop greater physical strength than that of most studious men; "the Northumbrian women," so says one of the Reports of the Agricultural Commission, "lift huge heavy sacks that it would puzzle many a man to move, and carry them from place to place with the greatest ease." I grant you that in savage times the reign of might was supreme, but mark the world's advance step by step as the years roll on, and it is one long story of mind subduing matter, science superseding mere physical strength; and remember, to follow the muscular argument to its logical conclusion, you must place a navvy or a prize-fighter higher in the scale of being than a high-souled, but feeble-bodied man of intellect; Tom Sayers or your typical village blacksmith, for instance, would rank far above such men as Darwin, Carlyle, or Stuart Mill.'

'But then women are not our superiors, but generally our inferiors in intellect also.'

'I do not see how you are to prove that, for until women have been allowed to share freely in every educational advantage, and been given every opportunity in common with men, it is impossible to gauge their mental capacity. It is impossible to say how much of the difference between men and women is due to training and popular opinion, or inherited from habits acquired by former generations. If women's mental deficiency was so obvious, why, in the past, were not more schools and colleges founded for her benefit with the object of counteracting so far as possible this radical inferiority? I should say that under the circumstances equality of attainment would argue that women were not only men's peers but their superiors, for they would have solved the difficulty of making bricks without straw, if with so little teaching and encouragement as they have had in the past, women were all as well-informed, as thoughtful, as logical, as men.'

'Haven't celebrated men had difficulties?' asked Major Knagge, with some impatience, 'and yet in—er—painting—music, poetry, you find distinguished men—er—twenty to one woman who has done anything worth looking at. What discoveries have women made? What have they invented?'

'Here, if anywhere, preparation and adequate stimulus are wanted, but until recently the study of mathematics, the best possible training for concentrated thoughts has been denied to women; surrounded by distractions at home, met by prejudice abroad, hemmed in on every side by the conditions of their life, the restraints of custom and prejudice, how should women have done much in the way of discovery and invention? They have been shut out, to a great degree, in the past from the wider fields of science and art, ignored by learned societies, denied admission to their meetings, still more to any honorary or pecuniary distinctions it was in their power to confer, what

chance have they had? The mind needs stimulus of some sort to arouse its energies; to arbitrarily decree that whatever any individual's genius or force of character she must not exercise these except within very narrow limits, that she cannot expect perfect freedom of choice as though she were a man, is the most effectual way of extinguishing any natural gifts she may possess. Mary Somerville's account of the discouragements to solid studies which she had to encounter in early youth is not unique; Mendelssohn's gifted sister possessed a musical genius second only to his, but her works, a tribute to whose excellence he has given in more than one private letter, were only allowed to be published under his name, it was not fitting that a woman should be known as a musical composer; some of Miss Edgeworth's works were for a like reason published in her father's name. That most important fact in scientific discovery, that certain flowers emit light after sunset, was first observed by Elizabeth Christian Linné, but this again, in most quarters, was attributed to her father, the celebrated naturalist; I could give you many more instances in which women, in spite of innumerable disadvantages, have been the real originators of useful inventions for which their male relatives have got the credit; though Sir Henry Bessemer himself, I believe, never made a secret of it, it is not, I think, very widely known that one of the most useful inventions generally attributed to him, viz., the simple plan of dating stamps to prevent fraud, which, it is considered, has saved the Government some millions, was really the idea of his wife. Several years ago, women in America obtained from the Government on an average about sixty patents per annum, and this number, I understand, is steadily increasing; in a patent-lawsuit in 1880, a woman, Helen M. McDonald, conducted her own case and won it, planting an injunction on a bold infringement, and utterly routing one of the most distinguished of the patent-law barristers.'

'I don't deny,' said Major Knagge, 'that there are women of talent, but I—er—maintain that they are the exception,

that—that—on the whole, in fact, woman's intellect is inferior to man's.'

'Do not commit the injustice of assuming that a person is incapable of performing any given task, while you are withholding the only tools with which that work could be satisfactorily accomplished. Where the sexes have had equal chances, as, for instance, on the stage, and to some extent in literature, they have distinguished themselves equally with men; indeed, I doubt if in some branches of literature they are not already surpassing us, while some have even triumphed over the partiality of our laws and the prejudices of society sufficiently to shine in lines from which the majority of women have been carefully excluded.'

'I must say,' replied the Major, 'I fail to see either the partiality of the one or the prejudices of the other.'

'It is not necessary with us, I grant you, as it is in some parts of China, to put up near our ponds and ornamental waters: "Notice—No girls to be drowned here;" nor are we taught, like the Jews, to give thanks in our churches that we were not born girls; but where do you find the man or boy who does not secretly congratulate himself upon the accident of his sex, not that women are in any single particular their inferiors, but solely and simply because unjust laws and social conditions, combined with ignorance of the true physiological interests of the race, sedentary occupations, false and superstitious theories on the subject of population, have made the lives of women less bearable than those of men? Every student of nature ought to know that the highest development comes latest on the scene; the question is not so much what women have done in the past, but whether they are not now actually gaining upon us.'

'But hard facts,' said Major Knagge, 'are stubborn things to deal with, and we all know that women's brains are smaller than those of men.'

'A whale's brain weighs double that of a man, yet it has never been asserted that it has the advantage over us in point

of intellect; the weight of brain tells us nothing except as compared with the size and power of the body; the mere propulsion of the muscles requires a large amount of nerve-force, and animals with large muscular development have correspondingly large brains; thus it is in the elephant tribe that the maximum size of brain is reached, for while a man's brain on the average weighs 49½ ozs., that of an elephant weighs from 8 to 10 lbs.;* tall men usually have larger brains than short ones, and an average woman's brain, though it weighs a few ounces less than an average man's, is not relatively smaller when compared with the body, but, if anything, larger. Size, like physical strength, is, I am sure you must know, so far from being a proof of intellectual power, that the strongest races are not by any means the most intelligent; the greatest minds in every age and country have dwelt more often than not in small or feeble bodies; the huge extinct beasts, the mammoth, the megatherium, the deinotherium, were lower in the scale of being than their less powerful successors; and can the strongest man compare himself with the animals whom, by his superior intelligence, he has tamed and brought under control; there is more actual strength in the arm or leg than in the eye, and yet who would not rather lose limbs than sight? In short, the "want of physical force argument," as applied in detraction to women, is quite beside the mark.'

'Oh, I am not—er—intending or, or wishing to say anything disrespectful of the ladies,' replied Major Knagge; 'they are very charming and—er—all that sort of thing, no doubt, but still I hold that their claim to equality is preposterous, and can never—er—be maintained.'

At this point Professor Wray changed the subject, and would not be led into it again during the remainder of their walk; while Major Knagge was inwardly congratulating himself upon having, by his acute reasoning powers, made some impression upon a man whom (although he considered him very misguided) he could not, on the whole, help respecting.

* Bain's *Mind and Body*.

It was well, perhaps, for his self-love that he did not look over Professor Wray's shoulder, or know what was running in his mind that evening as he wrote to his sister in town :—

'Amongst other burning questions, we have had some very warm discussions upon what, for want of a better name, may be called Women's Rights. Madeline Acton is as charming and sensible as ever, and I begin to think that between us we shall make a convert of Sir Henry Tregarthen, Mrs. Silverton's brother, a fine young fellow with good brains of his own, who means shortly to enter Parliament in the Liberal interest. I think we shall win him, though he chooses at present to sit on the opposition benches ; he is open to conviction, as he may well be, since it is only mediocrity that has reason to fear what it is pleased to call "the rivalry of women." "A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will;" I think the Spanish proverb is likely to prove true in the present instance, as it has done before, for Major Knagge (you remember my mentioning him) is hopeless; of all the dense, pig-headed, arguers in a circle!—Well, I had better say no more, for I have not quite got over a discussion which he almost thrust upon me this morning, and which I ended abruptly, only by a special effort refraining from Johnson's polite clincher, "I can give you a reason, Sir, but I can't give you an understanding."'

CHAPTER IX.

'There is some deep unsoundness in the time,
When it stares ever at the sins of women,
And lets its men alone.'

'Did He whose name we bear, the Man Divine
Teach this, when woman outcast, lost, and lone,
And broken-hearted, came and wept away
The baneful storms of passion at His feet?
. . . . . .
Are we His followers or the Pharisees?'

A Vision of To-day.

Ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετη.
Virtue in man and woman is the same.
'Antisthenes' in *Diogenes Laertius*, vi., 1, 5.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

As each day passed on, a better understanding, an increasingly cordial feeling appeared to be growing up between Sir Henry and Professor Wray; the latter being a good oarsman, the former still more or less disabled for long walks or rides, they had fallen into the habit of going out frequently together in a small boat, which Mrs. Silverton, from its exclusiveness, had not inappropriately named the *Tête-à-tête*. It was just possible for a small third person to sit on a cushion in the bows, and sometimes one or other of the ladies thus accompanied them; but to-day they were alone, and for once appeared more occupied with the subject of their conversation than with the idea of exploring creeks and caves, or hunting up, as was their wont, fossils, shells, sea-anemones, or whatever else nature might have hidden away in the recesses of that bold and romantic coast.

The Professor was resting on his oars, while his companion appeared to pay little attention to the guidance of their craft, which had drifted out some distance from the shore; but it did not much matter, for the wind had gone to breathe defiance or whisper hope elsewhere, and the sea showed only a ripple here and there dancing in the sunlight.

Sir Henry, unlike himself, was, however, not to be shamed into responsive brightness; there was more than a shadow of discontent in his voice as he said gloomily,—

'Miss Acton is about the last person I should have expected to care for the companionship of such a woman as Mrs. Wylde; there is scarcely a lady in Plymouth who will visit her.'

'And cannot you conceive that this may possibly be one of her strongest motives for going there?' asked his companion.

'But you do not know ——'

'I know this, that it is not the largest natured and the purest minded women who shrink from contact with an erring sister; naturally so, for they are just the ones who need have no fear that the world will say, "There is some fellow-feeling at the root of this sympathy."'

'Oh, I did not mean to imply,' qualified Sir Henry, 'that there was anything very wrong about Mrs. Wylde, though she has no doubt been very imprudent and got herself in consequence much talked about.'

'And you can hardly wonder at it; she is young and very pretty, so I understand; it does not enter her head, probably, to dream that the fact of her husband's absence with his ship calls for extra circumspection on her part, and so she has accepted the admiration and attention which idle men who abound in garrison towns are always ready enough to bestow.'

'And does it seem to you that a woman who has made herself notorious, as she has done, is a fitting friend for a girl like Miss Acton?'

'I do not see that we are called upon to decide in the matter; she is old enough and sensible enough to be the best judge in such a case; there may not be much in common between them, perhaps, but Mrs. Wylde (who is some connexion of Madeline's by marriage, I believe) is, from what I hear, just hovering on that borderland between safety and irretrievable disgrace, when it may make all the difference to her if even one of her own sex stretches out a friendly hand to hold her back, instead of helping to build up a wall which renders hopeless any progress except a downward one. It is because Miss Acton feels this, I am convinced, that she has gone to Plymouth to our cost, and probably against her own personal wishes. There seems to me more true womanliness in the charity which is not afraid of soiling its garments by contact with evil, than in the ignorance which ignores the existence of vice and calls itself innocence, or the virtue which

bases its claim to consistency upon the severity with which it visits the slightest infringement of outward propriety.'

'That is certainly no uncommon feature in the character of even seemingly kind-hearted women.'

'Mostly among the thoughtless and frivolous, I think, who do not know, and would not care to know, the temptations and trials to which some less fortunate women are subjected; and it may be that here and there, even amongst those of Madeline's school, we may find some who, in spite of higher culture and more liberal views, are inclined to be a little hard in such matters; but they are few, I think, and she is certainly not of their number. When the saving of a fellow-woman from a course which may end in lifelong misery and disgrace is in question, she would be the last to trouble herself about what the world or even some of her so-called friends might say, though where no principle is involved, I have often seen her, for the sake of others, conform to conventionalisms that I know have been irksome to her.'

'No doubt she is right,' said Sir Henry, frankly; 'I was more selfish than consistent, I think, in what I said just now, for I have often blamed women for being so hard upon their sex in this particular.'

'With mere fashionable butterflies, as I said just now, this may be the case, but I could name hundreds of good, true women who feel nothing but tender pity for their erring sisters, and indignation at a social system which has made their downward way so easy, the road back to honesty and happiness so all but unattainable. "One false step and you are lost for ever," is the cruel sentence which confronts them at every turn, and yet never was there a greater mistake than this assumption, that the instincts of purity in a woman's nature cannot survive one false step, or even more. I remember hearing Mrs. Butler give a touching account of a young French girl who had been decoyed from her home by offers of employment in England, and finally was driven by want and despair into a life of deepest ignominy. After the lapse of two years

she was brought in a dying state to one of our larger hospitals, there her ravings were only of France, of the sunny hills of Burgundy, of her father's vineyard, her mother's cottage, in fact her every thought seemed to the last innocent and sweet; her life was spoiled, poor child, but who could say that her moral nature was utterly corrupt? and is not this the case, perhaps, with thousands of others whom society turns from with loathing and contempt?'

'Very likely, but after all what are men to do in such a case? It is women who really have the making of public opinion.'

'Upon the soul of every responsible member of society rests some portion of the guilt; the most urgent need of our times is the united action of men and women in their conflict with these social evils. We may at least help those noble-hearted women who are working for justice, for honesty, for a loftier purity, by going to the root of the mischief, and while not ignoring their unfortunate or guilty sisters, are devoting their chief energies to obtaining work for the destitute, training for the ignorant, to raising their whole sex, in fact, by teaching the self-respect which is a natural result of leading active, useful, independent lives.'

'But has it not in some instances been a too great love of independence which has led girls into difficulties?'

'Rather, I think, emptiness, frivolity, and self-indulgence in the case of the rich, ignorance and want amongst the poor. It is time women should take a fresh start in the direction of self-reliance, since the reign of man's protection has brought the wretched outcasts of society so low.'

'I must say,' replied Sir Henry, 'I have always thought it hard lines that a woman who has erred through ignorance and inexperience should be thrust outside the pale of humanity, while the blackguard who has taken advantage of her ignorance, or weakness, or tenderness to betray her, gets off scot free; but the position is rather reversed, I think, with a woman who is leading a notoriously vicious life.'

'Are not men collectively more to blame even here? It is

demand which creates supply, the action and reaction of cause and effect are inseparable; but which party in a disgraceful league, think you, is most to blame, the one who possesses means, education, position, or the one who is probably goaded by want and despair into defiance of the world's opinion?'

'But subjective as well as objective influences must be taken into consideration; a man's nature is so entirely different from a woman's.'

'Men have strong passions it is true, but they are supposed to have the stronger wills, and though it is widely believed that the natures of men and women differ so radically as to make the same moral law inapplicable to both, yet it is an unsafe doctrine for any man who values his physical powers and intellectual development, and desires to preserve that self-respect and reverence for womanhood which are the only basis of a true and happy marriage, it is impossible that the voice of nature unperverted could have made the virtues of modesty and purity becoming to and necessary for a woman alone; right and wrong are in no way dependent on sex, and I am fully convinced that the general assumption of a man's not being bound by the same law of purity as a woman has been the cause of the most widespread evils, and is at the root of some of the most unjust and barbarous laws that ever defiled the statute-roll of countries calling themselves free and enlightened, not to say moral and religious.'

'You refer to——'

'To those most unrighteous and infamous laws which, in the face of strong protest from the admittedly most moral half of the community, have for the protection of men's dissipation, put into operation a system of organized bodily outrage upon women. I should like to know where is the justice, the morality of a Government, which, in order that it may maintain a healthy standing army, drives its unfortunate daughters down deeper and deeper into the abyss of infamy, not that its sons may grow wiser, or better, or purer men, but *that they may be able to sin with impunity?*'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'it seems to me that these laws which you condemn so strongly, though not actually repealed, have become in a great measure inoperative through the censure and vote in Parliament last year.'

'I am glad that England has taken the initiative even to this extent; but incredible as it may seem, there is a powerful clique, including many influential names, which has pledged itself to uphold, by every means in its power, a law that literally makes magistrates and doctors accomplices in vice, by facilitating the means through which it is carried on. This makes it all the more necessary, in the interests of public morality, that those who feel these laws to be an insult to every woman, a dishonour to every man in the country, should not cease to protest against them, until the resolution of last year (1883) is confirmed and established by Act of Parliament,' and Professor Wray, dipping his oars into the water, pulled vigorously for some minutes as a sort of safety valve for his indignant feelings.

'But those who most strongly support this Act, both in England and abroad, so I have understood,' said Sir Henry, 'while deploring the same, yet maintain its necessity; they have to meet a very palpable and present evil, they say, and their object is, I suppose, to make it the source of as little mischief as possible.'

'And so by way of raising the tone of public morality, a law is put into operation whose whole tendency is solely and simply to give an immense impetus to vice, which all the penitentiaries, refuges, and labours of social reformers are powerless to stem.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'has not the law a right to prevent any individual from becoming a source of evil to others?'

'The only legitimate way in which the law could step in (though I do not think it is practicable) would be by making impurity and its results on both sides a legal offence, certainly it has no right to spare the man at the expense of the woman, and in regard to the benefit alleged to have been derived from

ate regulation of vice, statistics show that in those
s where registration has been abolished disease in all its
as largely decreased.'*
understand long rows of figures have been brought for-
o prove the contrary, at any rate we must give the
ers of these Acts the credit of thinking themselves the
ons of public health and morality.'
may be so, and yet never was there a more infamous
class legislation; I wonder what the more thoughtful
t the poor think of a "necessity" which involves the
ur of their daughters; I wonder if these laws would ever
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the whole force could not produce one man capable of
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ble, as many a sad mistake has proved. I could give
re than one instance in which, to my own knowledge, a
y well-conducted girl has thus suffered through mis-
nsion, and the worst of it is, that when once taken by
ce, the burden of disproving their suspicion rests with
l though her innocence be proved, not only has she to
e imprisonment, shame, and exposure, but also the cost
wn defence. One would really think to judge from the
t light in which both law and society look after impurity
and women, that the fact of her erring in a large
y of cases only through want or wretchedness, while *he*
powerful motive of self-indulgence, makes her guilt out
roportion greater than his.'

* *Report of the Congress of the British and Continental Federation
bolition of State Regulation of Vice at the Hague, Sept.* 1883.

'It does seem unfair, and yet many doctors argue on sanitary grounds, as you know, that the same moral restraint should not be expected from men as from women.'

'I know, but I can only say that those who argue thus are unworthy members of an honourable profession. What would these doctors say, do you think, if called upon to sacrifice their own daughters to this supposed necessity? They would tell a different story I imagine. But the same false conception of the relative virtue of the two sexes is to be found in many of our social usages; for instance, it is evidently not thought an unmeet vocation for a pure and innocent girl to be the wife of a man whose past life may have been grossly immoral, "a reformed rake," we are told, "makes the best husband," while society would be horrified at the thought of an honourable man marrying a magdalen, and yet where is the difference? Next to the difficulties put in the way of poor women who would gladly earn an honest livelihood, I believe that this laxity, which winks at and condones immorality in men, is the chief cause of our social corruption, for its logical outcome is, that a large section of our women who might be leading happy, useful lives, are set aside to minister to men's irregularities, while natural, healthy intercourse between boys and girls, men and women, is discouraged as dangerous. There is much truth in what an American said to De Tocqueville when asked on one occasion why there was so much less flagrant immorality in that country than in England, he replied, because we have much freer intercourse with our women, and boys and girls being in a great measure taught on the same lines, they have numerous interests and pursuits in common beyond that of flirtation or serious love-making; you may depend upon it, the more that is done to bring young men and women, boys and girls together in rational pursuits, the sooner we shall see the worst evils of our social system disappear; indeed, I think it is impossible to calculate how much good is lost, how much evil results from the too common notion that love and marriage are the only safe means of intercommunion betweeen the two sexes. I only

wonder that things are not worse where men have so comparatively little intercourse with pure cultivated women. At school, at college, in their clubs, in barracks, this refining influence is wanting, and as a natural consequence they acquire a lower tone of moral purity, which is a stepping-stone in many instances to the formation of profligate habits, whose evil effects, unfortunately, do not pass away with one generation or two. And so it will be while rulers and philanthropists alike keep nipping at the branches of our social upas-tree instead of striking at its roots. It is useless to build up with one hand and pull down with the other, to weep over and bewail the general laxity of morals, so long as boys and young men are allowed only too much license, while girls instead of being taught the dignity of independence are supposed never to be in a position to take care of themselves, so long as they are trained on the false principle that virtue and ignorance of evil are one and the same thing, so long as vice, which in the one sex means life-long disgrace, in the other is actually encouraged by protective legislation. Upon my word, I do not think we have advanced greatly since the days when Chrysostom was considered a dangerous innovator because he taught that men should be pure and women brave. We male legislators and voters are not unlike the Hindoos who punished the crime of adultery with the most stringent severity in all those who were not of the Brahmin, that is, the law-making class, while these for the same offence escaped with only the loss of their hair.'

'By the way,' said Sir Henry, 'did you see that account of the last census in Rangoon, where a certain supervisor was astonished by finding all the grown up female population of one street described as "adulteresses;" when inquiry came to be made, however, into the cause of this deplorable frailty, it seems the native enumerator was under the impression that *adultress* was the feminine form of *adult*. But joking apart,' he continued, more seriously, 'you have put this subject before me in a new light, if I do not agitate for the entire repeal of the Act you condemn, I shall never join its supporters.'

'These are not pleasant themes for discussion,' said Professor Wray, 'but I do not think that on this account we have any right to ignore them. "It is very easy," as Charles Kingsley says,* "to turn away our eyes from ugly sights, and so consider ourselves refined"; but I never will believe that a man has a real love for the good and the beautiful unless he attacks the evil and the disgusting the first moment that he sees it. I only wish more women of position, of intellect, of culture, had courage to face these questions in the interests of justice and morality. If a starving beggar obtains a copper under false pretences the law punishes him heavily, but what punishment is awarded to a man, who, under false promises of marriage, deceives a trusting girl and then deserts her? Maternity is a woman's special mission, so some people assert, and yet who so degraded if, though it may be through small fault of her own, she become a mother outside marriage? Her loss of reputation makes it doubly hard for her to support herself, much more her child, and what is she to do? It is only by means of the shame and exposure of a prosecution that the father can be forced to pay some paltry weekly pittance of a few shillings towards its support, and this they frequently avoid by changing their place of abode. Every girl on the point of becoming a mother knows something of this, something of the disgrace and want and pitiless scorn that await her; and when perhaps, without being naturally either cruel or unloving, but driven almost mad with pain, and terror, and disgrace, she kills or deserts her infant, the law comes down upon her crushing what little hope, or life, or chance of better things remains. And where is the father of her child all this time? Unfortunately, I sometimes think, paternity carries with it no physiological responsibilities, *he* is not answerable; he is happy; he is prosperous; he is an estimable member of society. The Brahmins are the law-making class you know, what is mortal sin in others is venial in them.'

'"The prayers of the congregation are desired for an old woman who is anxious to become a new man"; I suppose,' said

* May 21st, 1844. *Life*, vol. i., p. 121.

Sir Henry, 'the old lady in question did not mean a change in that sense, but one often hears girls wishing they had been born boys, while an eminent anatomist once declared that it appeared to him a cruelty in nature to have produced such a being as a woman, and I begin to think there is really something in that view of the question.'

'But it is not nature which has made the virtues of modesty and chastity obligatory for women only, it is the egotism and selfishness of a privileged class. None can say that men have made a just use of their political ascendency while such inequalities and abuses as I have named exist; the fact is, no man can possibly put himself in a woman's place, feel all the hopeless misery of an ill-used wife, the anguish of a mother robbed of her children, the helplessness of a girl betrayed.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Sir Henry, 'that in the case of a single woman who has been guilty of any indiscretion the punishment is often cruelly severe, but I do not think it can be denied that immorality in a married woman is, for obvious reasons, much more serious than in a man.'

'I know the argument, that the legitimacy of the race is imperilled, but I do not see that any sophistry will justify the condoning of an immoral act in the one sex and utterly condemning it in the other; and yet this is what our law does, when it allows a man to divorce his wife for unfaithfulness alone, but will not release *her* unless he has been guilty of absolute cruelty as well as adultery, whereas in my opinion either one or the other ought to legally justify a woman in seeking a separation; the fact that a cruel and brutal husband knows that so long as actual unfaithfulness cannot be proved against him, he may go very great lengths in ill-treating the victim whom he calls his wife, without the law giving her any redress, and without her having the power to escape, is an encouragement to him to persevere in his evil courses; in short, the too frequent result of our present system is to multiply irregular connexions between the sexes; the woman,

under these circumstances, knows that she is free to leave any day, and the man under fear of this behaves himself—"My Tom brings me some of his wages now," said one poor woman, on being urged by a visitor to marry the man with whom she was living, "but if I married him he'd be like the rest"; and this is no uncommon story, indeed the same person told me at the time, that a wide experience had proved the children of the unmarried in manufacturing districts to be actually better fed and attended to than those of the married, so much so that women for their sakes often refuse to marry when the men wish it. Does not this of itself prove the need of some reform in our marriage laws? By not allowing a marriage contract to be dissolved, however undesirable, save and except for actual adultery, they in a manner hold out encouragement to the unhappy husband or wife to the commission of this crime as the only hope of release. I know, unfortunately, of more cases than one which prove this. What can be more unreasonable than to force two people, who have learned to despise or hate each other, to live together in the closest intimacy? Is it any wonder that the worst crimes are often the result? On the abrogation of the law of divorce in France, the Marquis d'Herbouville said in the tribune, that since the abolition of divorce, the number of husband and wife-murders had become so frequent that it seemed as if the elements of poison had in many instances been mingled in the wedding-feast itself.'

'But there is another cause allowed to be sufficient ground for divorce.'

'The more disgrace to us that it is so; it is an insult and a mockery to all true respecters of marriage in its highest sense, that a physical misfortune should be considered cause sufficient, while drunkenness or any other sign of mental or moral deterioration is on no account suffered to be a plea for release.'

'I suppose,' said Sir Henry, 'this view of the subject, which I agree with you in thinking a false one, is a survival of the old theory that marriage was a mere fleshly union and

defilement, denied utterly to the priesthood, and even in the laity looked upon as a state much inferior to celibacy. But about this question of divorce. Of course there can be nothing in life more wretched than an ill-assorted marriage, but at the same time, so long as our laws are supposed to be founded upon the teaching of the Bible, so long as Church and State are united, I do not see how we can consistently countenance divorce save from the one cause.'

'Then the sooner we get a fuller understanding and a more reasonable interpretation of the Divine laws of the universe the better. For instance, I quite endorse such injunctions as this, "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," but unless you mean to imply a failure on the part of the Deity, unless you mean to acknowledge that He has done His work very badly, you cannot maintain that heaven has had the making of all our ill-assorted, mercenary, loveless marriages, whose miserable results fill the records of the Divorce Court, swell our police intelligence, and afford endless material to the writers of sensational fiction, though they must be ever a source of indignation and grief to all right thinking persons. Again, you often hear it said by the opponents of divorce—"But you know we are told *and they twain shall be one flesh.*" Does it ever concern them to remember, I wonder, that where any portion of the body has become a source of pain and danger it is universally held the wisest plan to get rid of it as soon as possible? Why are so many good people not content to take the general teaching of the gospel of kindness, of mercy, of forgiveness, of purity, but must wrest particular texts to suit their own notions of what is fitting, often to the utter subversion of all logic and common-sense.'

'But a great many,' said Sir Henry, 'would reply to this that they do not approve of private judgment except within very narrow limits; that they take, in fact, the Church's interpretation of the Bible as their safest guide.'

'I know; but then arises the question, what Church, or

what period of its history, or what exponent of its teaching are they to rely upon to save them the trouble and responsibility of exercising their own judgment upon any debateable question? In the earliest, and presumedly the purest days of the Christian religion, other causes of divorce were allowed besides that of adultery; St. Ambrose, for example, held apostacy sufficient cause; the laws of the Christian Emperors, Theodosius and Valentinian, enacted that though marriage might not be dissolved without just cause, yet that there were many cases in which it was advisable; Charlemagne repudiated his first wife because she was not a Christian; while with us, marriage, long after the introduction of Christianity, was considered a private contract, at which if the clergy were present it was simply as guests, while divorce was a recognised institution. About the eighth century the Church thought it expedient to make marriage a sacrament at which its priests were required to officiate, of course not gratuitously, but there were still, I believe, some seventeen cases in which divorce was permitted. As time went on, marriage, though still held to be a sacrament, was, at the same time, as you were remarking, considered by some curious process of reasoning to be such a defilement that it was not encouraged much even in laymen, while to priests it was positively forbidden, though once entered into, no incompatibility or misery was held to be sufficient ground for a release; a state of things which gave immense power to the clergy, who maintained the sole right to rivet or loose these matrimonial bonds.'

'But how about the Reformed Church?'

'Wycliffe asserts that divorce is lawful to the Christian for many other causes besides adultery, and if Milton may be considered as the mouthpiece of Puritan doctrine in these matters, you know how he writes on the subject.'*

'Milton's married life, however, was not a very happy commentary upon his theories.'

'That is true, but when married people, owing to incom-

* See Milton's *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 1644.

patibility, find it impossible to live together in any comfort, which is better, that they should part and lead peaceable, independent lives, or that they should spend an existence either of hypocrisy or open enmity, lowering to the nature of both, and wretched to contemplate? Look at the position of an honourable, upright man, married to a woman who turns out a hopeless drunkard; or a good, high-souled, pure-minded woman trapped into marriage with a man of low principles and secretly gross nature; is it reasonable or just that the tie should be held binding in such a case? Is it not monstrous that a felon when he has worked out his term of penal servitude may return and legally compel his wife to live with him, whether she loves him or turns from him, as is most likely, in loathing and disgust?'

'I suppose, though, that in such extreme cases as this it would not be difficult to obtain at least a judicial separation?'

'More difficult than you think, I am afraid, especially for women who are ignorant, or poor, or friendless.'

'But is it not likely that if greater freedom of divorce were allowed, the privilege would be abused, oftenest perhaps by our own sex, and for no other reason than that they have grown tired of their wives?'

'Such cases might, I think, be in a measure provided against, but where there is true affection and esteem there would be no fear of this sort of thing, and where love is wanting, or has waned, what becomes of the semblance of marriage? What is it that sanctifies this union, the love which binds soul to soul, or the religious ceremony and legal contract which, however good in their way, are worse than nothing in the absence of those feelings which no vows can affect either one way or the other? If there were a periodic and solemn renewal of contract at the end of a term of one year, or two, or three, or more, as seemed advisable, when man and wife should be free to part by mutual consent or to renew their vows, I believe the result would be not only the immediate diminution of crime, but an immense decrease in

matrimonial breaches of the peace and even of petty disagreements or misunderstandings, for so long as any love remains, the very fear, the very possibility of parting would make both husband and wife "beware of entrance to a quarrel." A contentious couple had one day been disputing as usual when the wife pointed to the cat and dog lying on the hearthrug in the most friendly manner side by side—"Thou see'st Jacob, even cat and dog can live together happily." "Aye," growled the husband, "but tie them together and see what will happen." Now this man, I suspect, would have been much more chary of expressing his contempt, if on their intercourse becoming unbearable they might have parted by mutual consent.'

'I do not know; there are some natures so fickle, that they would contemplate a frequent change of condition with the greatest equanimity; like the hero I read of once in an ancient anecdote, who is represented as sitting in a window deeply absorbed in a book, "when a gentlewoman came to him, and *Sir* (sayde she), *I would I were your booke* (because she loved the gentleman). *So would I* (quoth he), *I wish you were. But what booke would you have me bee* (sayde the other) *if I were to bee so? Marry an almanacke* (quoth the gentleman), *because I would change every yeare.*"'

'Had your friend been given to understand, perhaps, that whatever book was chosen, if he valued it so little as from the first to plan deliberately to fling it away at the end of a year, he must remain without literature altogether for at least as long a period, he perhaps would have thought twice before carrying the principle of his repartee into practice.'

'But do you not think that the indissolubility of marriage is in the interests of women? I am afraid, if the truth must be told, that Orsino was not far wrong when he acknowledged—

> "Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
> More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won
> Than women's are."

I am afraid they would be the chief sufferers if greater freedom of divorce were permitted.'

'I do not think so; the law of course would have to be very careful not to countenance license, or the inconsiderate breaking of faith, and in these days no Act would be likely to pass conferring upon men the power of putting away their wives at pleasure; as things stand at present while to the husband an ill-assorted marriage is a constraint, to the wife it becomes the most intolerable of servitudes. I do not think there is much fear of the ordinary English man or woman being dubious about the benefit of marriage as an institution, it is only when perverted from its right use by a want of true affection and entire sympathy, that it is a mistake to try and prove this parody of a true union a holy and honourable estate. It is because I honour true marriage so highly that I protest against its loveless desecration as against any other form of legalised prostitution. Our law does not recognise the religious vows of monk or nun, it holds that people change their minds, and that it is not right therefore, under the influence of what may be a passing emotion, to bind oneself to a state of celibacy for life. Does not the same rule apply in a measure to life-long vows of constancy?'

'And yet,' said Sir Henry, 'to any one who truly loves, the idea, the very thought of any possible change, must be utterly repulsive.'

'Certainly; so long as true love continues on both sides I can conceive of no motive strong enough to make the thought bearable; constancy, so far from diminishing, is likely to become more general as the entire equality of man and woman in the marriage state is recognised; but you cannot, by any number of difficult or impracticable laws, force people to be constant, though it would be very delightful no doubt if all men, and women too, were honourable, loving, true, upright, sound both physically and mentally; but we must take nature as it is, not as we should like it to be, and it always seems to

human nature than to suppose that this would generally be desired by either father or mother, but these are matters that could be regulated by law without much difficulty I imagine. And my position remains in any case untouched by these side issues; every year that I live I become more and more convinced that by affording facilities for dissolving those fatal shams, which often go by the name of marriage, we best vindicate the divinity of true marriage. It seems to me that so far from its being in any sense demoralising to sever this relation when it has become a curse, such a term ought rather to be applied to a state of things which makes the commission of a legal offence the only means by which such unhappy couples can free themselves from a state of perpetual suffering, caused perhaps by no greater fault than want of penetration, prudence, or foresight.'

'By the way,' exclaimed Sir Henry, suddenly looking at his watch after the lapse of some moments, during which nothing more was said on either side, 'talk of prudence and foresight, we promised to be back punctually at one o'clock, and it now only wants ten minutes to the hour; give me the other oar, we shall do it I believe yet; how fortunate that the tide is in our favour, we can run into the little creek just below the tennis-ground, and reach the house in two minutes.'

'And you have quite got rid of the "blues,"' said the Professor, looking with something almost like affection at the bright, handsome face of his companion, as he insisted upon taking his share of hauling up the boat at the landing-place.

'Quite; thanks to your good company; I believe, if the truth must be told, I am grateful for having, in this instance, been put utterly in the wrong. What a noble, true-hearted girl she is,' he continued, after a moment's pause, 'one whose friendship it would be worth spending a lifetime to win; as for anything more, I don't know what man would dare——'

'Men *have* dared to woo, and more than this have *won* such

women before to-day,' was Professor Wray's reply, to which Sir Henry answered nothing, but the momentary shadow passed from his face, and as they reached the house, for a second the two men grasped each other's hands in silence. An understanding of some sort there evidently was between them.

CHAPTER X.

'To see one half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation in government is a political phenomenon which, according to all abstract principles, it is impossible to explain.' TALLEYRAND.

'Might not the presence of a few virtuous, experienced, well-educated women, keep candidates for very shame from saying and doing things from which they do not shrink before a crowd of men who are on the average neither virtuous, experienced, or well educated, by wholesome dread of that most terrible of all earthly punishments—at least in the eyes of a manly man—the fine scorn of a noble woman? Might not the intervention of a few women who are living according to the eternal laws of God, help to infuse some slightly stronger tincture of those eternal laws into our legislators and their legislation?'

CHARLES KINGSLEY, *Women and Politics*, Macmillan.

'I observe that in a recent debate in another place and country, some ridicule was occasioned by a gentleman advocating the rights of the other sex to the suffrage. But as far as mere abstract reasoning is concerned, I should like to see anybody get up and oppose that claim; I say that in a country governed by a woman, where you allow women to form part of the other estate of the realm, I do not see, where she has so much to do with Church and State, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote.'

LORD BEACONSFIELD, *Speech in the House, April*, 1866.

'As far as I am able to judge, there is more presumptive ground for a change in the law than some of the opponents of the measure are disposed to own. . . . . I cannot help thinking that for some reason or other there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under social arrangements. . . . . I may be told that there is no direct connexion between this and the parliamentary franchise, and I admit it; but at the same time I am by no means sure that these inequalities may not have an indirect connexion with a state of law in which the balance is generally cast too much against women and too much in favour of men.'

W. E. GLADSTONE, *Speech in the House of Commons, May 3rd*, 1871.

'I wish women had the franchise, for they would make a better use of it than their husbands.'

RICHARD COBDEN, *Speech in Covent Garden Theatre, Jan. 15th*, 1845.

'The responsibilities which the struggle for existence impose upon women, the legal rights which make it possible to discharge those responsibilities, can only be effectually guaranteed by direct parliamentary representation. Though the franchise, which is at once a practical and logical necessity, may be denied for some time yet by a people as illogical as they boast that they are, though not always so practical as they think themselves to be, its ultimate concession is certain, and not far distant.'

Daily News, April 22nd, 1884.

CHAPTER X.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

'As usual, you are better than your word, dear,' exclaimed Mrs. Silverton, as some few days later she flew down stairs and into the hall to greet her friend who had just arrived in a fly from the station. 'I *am* glad to see you though; we have been *so* dull without you; Professor Wray's locks have grown perceptibly longer and thinner; Harry's face the same; Major Knagge is pining for his chosen antagonist; and as for ourselves, like Madame de Sévigné, we have been "throwing the days at the head of any one who wanted them, and even slept in a hurry," in our impatience for your return, though I hardly ventured to hope that you would be back before the end of the week; but come into the drawing-room, and we will have some tea at once; you must want it after your journey; I shall not wait for the others, they are somewhere about the place, and are sure to be in before very long.'

'Thanks, dear,' replied Madeline, returning with equal warmth her friend's kiss and hand-clasp; 'I am equally pleased to get back, and shall be glad of my tea by-and-by, but I did not come away without luncheon.'

'Which being interpreted means you had a sandwich at twelve o'clock; I know you too well, you see, to be deceived. Now set down in that easy chair and do as you are told without any further protest. I must say, you seem to have thriven on absence from us,' continued Mrs. Silverton, contemplating her friend with eyes in which a large amount of admiration and affection shone through a shade of assumed pique and disappointment. 'What have you done to yourself? I never saw you, I think, in the course of all our long lives looking so bright and happy, I think, which is saying a great deal.'

'I think delight at returning to Craig's Nest, to say nothing of getting successfully through an ordeal, may have something to do with it,' replied Madeline, laughing in sympathy with her friend's evident good spirits. 'You know the American song,' she continued, as taking off hat and gloves, she leaned back in her chair, cup in hand, nothing loth to be taken care of after four days of fatigue and anxiety.

'There was a man what had a clock,
His name was Matthew Mears,
He wound it reg'lar every night
For four and twenty years.
And when this precious time-piece proved
An eight-day clock to be,
A madder man than Matthew Mears
You wouldn't wish to see.'

'I do not like work of supererogation any better than Mr. Mears, and when one has nerved oneself to do a disagreeable thing, it is pleasant to find it was worth doing—*Les on-dits font la Gazette des Fous*, you know; the world, as Mrs. Candour says, is so censorious, that it never does to believe hearsay in such cases, and I am very glad I went.'

'You found, in short, that Mrs. Wylde is "not so devil as she is black," to quote the Portuguese version of a proverb I should like to brand into the minds of some people I could name—you see I can quote upon occasion, too—well ——'

'To make a long story short, Mrs. Wylde did not want much persuasion to induce her to decide on leaving Plymouth, and the horrid garrison-town gossip will soon find its level, I suspect. She is coming to us in London for a time, as soon as I get back; and since Captain Wylde is going to try for a home-appointment on his return next year, I think she will probably take rooms or a small furnished house near us for the time; she seemed to like this idea better than any other.'

'In fact you are a little witch, and have won her heart as you do every one's, and have made her do exactly what you pleased. Oh, Harry! eaves dropping! I am ashamed of you,'

Mrs. Silverton exclaimed, as having come round behind her friend's chair to straighten one of the sunny braids of hair which her hat had somewhat displaced, looking up she saw her brother standing just within the open French window at the other end of the room. 'How long have you been there, please, behind my back?'

'Miss Acton will bear witness, I am sure, that I have only this minute come in,' replied the person addressed, as laying down his cap and racket-bat, he came forward with unmistakable pleasure to greet their guest; 'so not having been an intentional listener, please remember that I expect to hear nothing but good of myself.'

'Then by way of inaugurating the expected string of compliments,' replied Madeline, as they shook hands, 'allow me to congratulate you on having so completely taken yourself off the sick-list.'

'I had no choice, you see, since my medical adviser gave up the case and ran away.'

'Madeline does not want any assurances to prove that you are a very ill-used person,' said his sister; 'her conscience pricks her dreadfully, I know, that she should have allowed anything else to occupy her mind. Will your nerves stand it?' she continued, in mock anxiety, pretending to withhold from his outstretched hand the cup of tea she had just poured out. 'What do you think, Madeline?'

'I have occasionally met people,' replied Madeline, 'so nervous that their life seems one long apology for having come into existence; one always feels so sorry for them, it must be so wretched; but I should never have thought of putting Sir Henry in that list, so I really do not see why he should be denied his tea.'

'I see it is no good to depend on your support,' said Mrs. Silverton; 'but since men are always talking with more or less contempt of tea as a woman's beverage, I do not see why we should not keep it to ourselves, or at least give it them only by special grace; I mean to have a tea-cloth

embroidered in striking colours with "All Rights Reserved" upon it.'

'And yet I am sure,' said her brother, 'you would not have the heart to exclude us from a rite so sacred as afternoon tea. Just think how bad it would be for our morals, and what an impetus to the sale of less innocent drinks; why the Chinese consider the connexion of ethics with the paraphernalia of tea-drinking so intimate, that the only oath, I believe, which they hold to be absolutely and irrevocably binding on their conscience is that to which they pledge themselves by the breaking of a saucer.'

'Please do not think of taking any oath while you are here,' exclaimed the young matron, spreading her protecting arms around the tray and such of the precious old-fashioned ware (Madeline's wedding present) as remained upon it—

> '"There's a joy without canker or cark,
> There's a pleasure eternally new,
> 'Tis to gaze on the glaze and the mark
> Of china that's old and that's blue."

So you do not mean to support my amendment, Madeline; I am afraid you are not true to our principles.'

'But I do not think that the "All Rights Reserved" suggestion would be true to our principles,' was the reply. 'What we want is to share, not monopolise privileges, to claim more would be to set a very bad example.'

'To *follow* it, you mean, dear; has not the other half of the race from time immemorial required us to submit to as justice their approbation of all the chief civil and political rights. Oh, thank you, auntie,' to Miss Wynter and Mrs. Knagge, who had just entered the room; 'I hope you enjoyed your walk; it was good of you to think of calling at the post-office.'

'What is that formidable document?' inquired Sir Henry, as his sister opened a large sheet of blue foolscap; 'it looks suspiciously like some legal business, a parliamentary petition, or something equally troublesome.'

'You are not far wrong; read it if you like.'

'Thanks; oh, I see——

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

"The Humble Petition of the Undersigned Sheweth

"That in the judgment of your Petitioners the Parliamentary Franchise should be extended to women who possess the qualifications which enable men to vote, and who in all matters of local government have the right of voting.

"Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House will pass a measure to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women.

"And your Petitioners will ever pray," &c.

"Should women sit in Parliament,
A thing unprecedented,
A great part of the nation then
Would be miss-represented."'

went on Sir Henry solemnly, as though his epigram made part of the contents of the document in his hand.

'But we are not talking about sitting in Parliament,' replied his sister.

'No, I know; not at present, but how long will it be before you do? This petition,' he continued, turning it over in his hand, 'is moderate enough in its demands, at first sight at least; but, my dear, how many people in these regions do you think you will get to sign it?'

'All the sensible ones that I ask, beginning with you.'

'With me! Oh no; this signing of petitions is far too serious a matter to be done off-hand; I don't know that the majority of women themselves want the suffrage, nor what those who do desire it are going to gain by it; in fact, I must look into the subject a great deal more than I have done yet, before I commit myself to any definite course of action.'

'I should think from your extreme caution that you were a Member of the Government already. I always notice that Members in office and out of office are altogether different beings; in the one case so brave in the statement of their opinions, so generous in assurances of what *they* would do when in power, so daring, so active, so full of resource; in the other so cautious, so reserved, so afraid of taking any steps towards many needed reforms, for fear of endangering their party.'

'Whence this severity? Because the Government of most countries has hitherto been composed almost exclusively of men? I can quite believe that women would be more venturesome, but is it not better for the ship of State that prudence should hold the helm, even although it may lead for the time to the toleration of certain abuses, than that a Government should make shipwreck of good and bad together? Do you not think so?' he asked, turning to Madeline.

'No doubt; but still I think there is a medium between the two extremes, and it is possible that this might be found in the combined action of men and women.'

'You mean that men being naturally slower and more indolent, women might act as a spur and stimulus to counteract our over-caution?'

'Possibly. You know under present conditions what a time it takes to move the cumbrous machinery of State to any effect, you know the way in which evils are allowed to exist age after age unchecked, the interminable arguing to none effect which occupies at least half the time of the House of Commons, the circumlocution, the red-tape, the officialism which rules public business everywhere; does not this all make it probable that the more active impulses of women would be politically useful in rousing men's consciences and feelings on many points? The ship of State you speak of would make more satisfactory progress, I think, with less ballast and more sail. There are always two sides to be looked at, are there not, in all questions political as well as social, and until the united

faculties of men and women are brought to bear upon both, I do not think you can get a complete view; certainly as things stand at present we have no claim to the possession of a representative government.'

'If, as no doubt is the case, you have read the sixth satire of Juvenal, you will probably remember the terrible fiasco which resulted from the struggle of women for emancipation.'

'Yes,' said Madeline, 'I have read it, but I do not think you can take a satire or a political lampoon, and argue from it as if it were a matter of historical truth; even amongst the ancients the denial to women of political rights was thought by some writers so palpable an anomaly that they were compelled to invent fables to account for it, like that of Neptune and Minerva.'

'I do not recollect it.'

'The story, which is, I believe, imputed to Varro, says that when Cecrops was building Athens, Minerva and Neptune disputed for the honour of giving it a name. Athene carried her point by a majority of one, upon which Neptune in revenge overflowed and laid waste Attica, and was only propitiated on a decree being passed that women should never be allowed to vote, and that no child should ever bear its mother's name.'

'Those ancient fables are, some of them, very much to the point,' said Sir Henry; 'but to come down to more modern writers in support of the theory of women's non-fitness for Government, have you read Paul de Kock's *Madame Pantalon*, or Besant's *Revolt of Man?* They neither of them give a very inviting picture of the result of feminine supremacy.'

'Both these authors draw a very ingenious and amusing but none the less a fancy portrait of what women desire, which is not political supremacy, but only some approximation to equal civil rights. The authors you name have evidently only skimmed the surface of this subject, while thinking that they have sounded its depths, but they are like one-eyed people trying to describe a round object when they have seen but

one side of it. In the *Revolt of Man*, for instance, women are represented as banishing men altogether from the arena of life, and both in public and private affairs seizing the supreme authority and monopolising power in just the very way we have been protesting against as wrong in any section of the community, whether composed of men or women, nobles or prolétaires.'

'Well,' replied Sir Henry, 'as I have said more than once, I am open to conviction if you can prove your theories to be practical and practicable; you will not, I am sure, expect me to promise more.'

'No, I think you are quite right not to sign this petition until you have thoroughly examined the subject; I cannot understand the indifference to political questions affected by some persons; surely what influences the life and growth of a nation ought to be a matter of some importance to every individual composing it; I would much rather have to deal with hesitation than hear men say promptly, as they do sometimes, "I don't know much about this women's suffrage and I care less, but I could not think of disobliging a lady, I will sign the paper by all means."'

'Just as if one were a child,' exclaimed Mrs. Silverton, with some contempt, 'to be humoured in its idle fancies, and not a reasonable human being asking for a privilege which it is an outrage on all consistency and justice to refuse. But I am glad that you are ready, Harry, to fairly examine the subject at any rate, if you do no more.'

'So am I,' replied Madeline, 'for I always find that our chief opponents are those who have never given the question any really serious consideration; so however valiantly and persistently you may fight against us, Sir Henry, we shall not despair of your ultimate conversion; perhaps you have never heard that one of the ablest advocates and warmest supporters of women's claim to the suffrage in America first became convinced of its wisdom and justice by trying to write against it; when he began to weigh his own arguments in the balance he

found them wanting in logic, and then he thought it was time to see whether the same could be said for those on the other side, the consequence being—well—I think the only natural one under the circumstances.'

'I can quite understand,' said Sir Henry, 'that with your culture, holding such an independent position, and taking such a keen interest in politics as you do, that you should feel warmly upon this subject; in fact, if the question were one of giving you personally the franchise I should not hesitate a moment.'

'I am sure Madeline is actuated by no such low motives as mere personal interest,' said his sister, indignantly, 'it is a question of abstract justice.'

'I have heard lawyers declare that there is no such thing as abstract justice.'

'I am not surprised, for if anything would make a man doubt the existence of justice in the abstract, I think it would be a legal training and career.'

'I know better than to cross swords with you, my dear, when you are in that mood,' replied Sir Henry, laughing, 'but,' he continued, turning to Miss Acton, 'with those who assert that the denial of the franchise to women is inconsistent and unjust, rests the burden of proving it so.'

'Certainly; and in the first place is it not as unjust to deny political rights to any individual for the mere accident of her having been born a girl instead of a boy, as to let the question of a man's skin being black or white determine his lifelong freedom or slavery? So long as household suffrage is the law of the land, is it not a distinct injustice to create artificial distinctions between persons who equally fulfil the conditions qualifying for electoral power? With us the only basis of political right is the possession of a certain amount of property, the payment of rates and taxes; is it consistent then that women who possess this property, who pay these taxes, should be excluded? Is it right that where burdens are imposed, as in the ratepaying clauses of certain Acts, the

term *He* should be made to apply to women-householders (or, to quote the choice language of our legislature, words importing the masculine gender were deemed and taken to include females*), whereas in those clauses of the same Acts conferring the privileges avowedly offered as an equivalent, the term *He* is made to exclude the same women-householders. Is it not unjust that any Government should, for the expenses of a country, drain money from the pockets of women, and at the same time refuse them a voice in the Government of that country; that women should be weighted, in short, with the burdens of citizenship and denied its privileges? It would, at least, be only fair that they should have the choice either to be released from tax-paying, or be allowed the vote to which taxation entitles them; if under these circumstances they chose the former as, no doubt many women-householders would do, there would then, I grant you, be no cause of complaint; but as matters stand a burden is imposed, whilst the equivalent privilege obtained by all *men* is, in the case of women, denied. Is it fair that the intelligent, thoughtful, active-minded of the one sex should be shut out where the degraded, drunken, ruffianly of the other, may, when he possesses the requisite property-qualification, vote without question? I must say I think it is difficult to see any logical grounds by which the ignorant and vulgar are thus often placed above the educated, thoughtful, and refined.'

'I should not say,' replied Sir Henry, 'that the burdens of a State consist only of paying rates and taxes, there are other exertions by which a State is upheld that are equally important; it may be that women contribute their full share of these, but in any case is the vote after all such a very great privilege?'

'It appears to me that men think it so,' said Mrs. Silverton. 'What is the right to property without the right to protect it?'

'I think,' said Madeline, 'I have heard you in speaking of

* Interpretation Clause. Public Health Act, 1848.

the county franchise call it a hardship that so many intelligent men should for so long have had nothing to do with taxation except to pay, no voice in the laws they were compelled to obey, and is it not equally hard for women? A man may always hope to work his way up to being in a position to claim the franchise on the strength of his 10*l.* or 12*l.* rating, but a woman, however hard she may labour with hands or head, however much money she may earn or inherit, however vivid an interest she may take in politics, however keen an intelligence she may bring to bear upon them, though as landlord or tenant she is fulfilling the very duties which entitle a man to vote, she is for ever held incompetent to share with him the common duty of citizenship, and this, when it is the avowed principle of our constitution that taxation and representation are correlatives.' *

'Hear, hear,' said Professor Wray, who had just entered the room, followed by Mr. Silverton and Major Knagge, 'I am glad to find a good cause so ably advocated.'

'It is all of no avail however,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'we want your help to bring my brother to a right way of thinking upon this question of women's suffrage.'

'Indeed; but perhaps his opposition is less real than assumed for the purpose of drawing out such powers of debate as I have been listening to for the last few minutes, I do not think either you or Miss Acton require any help from me in argument; but I do not, for my part, see how it can logically be denied that this principle of taxation and representation being co-extensive practically covers the claim of women to be represented; so long as there is no male and female rate of taxation, it is unreasonable that in the question of voting sex should be made a disability, the result being that a large amount of property in the kingdom is practically disfranchised and unrepresented.'

'It seems to me,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that the people who

* [This anomaly is rendered yet more striking since the passing of the new Franchise Act.—Ed.]

oppose women's suffrage must be either wilfully ignorant or else wanting in the Englishman's proverbial love of fair play. I was reading the report of an old debate the other day where in reply to a proposition that any one who had been once under sentence of penal servitude should be held during the rest of his life incapable of voting, Mr. Gladstone objected on the ground that a citizen ought not to bear for life the brand of electoral incapacity. I thought I should very much have liked to ask why citizens who have committed no crime, unless womanhood be counted one, should "have to bear through life the brand of electoral incapacity." A lunatic may in a lucid interval be held capable of voting, but we have no lucid intervals; a stupid or ignorant boy as soon as he comes of age, supposing he possesses the property-qualification, may claim his vote, but we, as every one knows, never grow up, our understandings are always infantile, a woman of forty is politically as much an infant as a girl of four.'

'There is no doubt,' said Professor Wray, 'that this political ostracism of women which allows them no voice in the imposition of taxes on their property, in the framing of laws which intimately affect their lives, liberties, and happiness, is more widely reaching in its injustice than is generally supposed; in the case, for instance, of a bribery commission where a borough has been found guilty of corrupt practices, women-householders have to pay their share of the expenses, which are practically a fine incurred by those amongst whom no woman is numbered. There is another case in which the want of a vote presses more heavily still, I think, and that is upon women-farmers who, through not possessing the franchise, are unable to get long leases, and have, therefore, very great difficulty in making their land productive. I know of one instance, for example, where upon a single estate no less than seven widows were ejected who, if they had possessed a vote, would have been allowed to retain their farms.'

'I heard,' said Madeline, 'only last month of a very sad but I am afraid not uncommon case of this description. The

occupier of a large farm in the midland counties died, and his widow, who was a woman of some ability and energy, determined for the sake of her young children to turn to advantage the experience gained during her husband's illness, and to spare no effort which might make the farm at least as profitable as it had been in his time. She succeeded beyond her expectations, and it was, therefore, with the utmost dismay that on applying for a renewal of her lease she was told that the place she loved so well, the home of her early married life, the birthplace of her children, in which they all took such pride and pleasure, could be her's no longer; in fact, that she must leave as soon as possible. Nearly heartbroken at the thought, and not knowing which way to turn, she sought an interview with the landlord himself, and entreated him to tell her what she had done to be so hardly used—"Is not the farm," she asked, "if anything, in better condition than when it came into my hands two years ago?" He was obliged to acknowledge that this was the case. "Have not I paid my rent regularly?" "Yes." "Then what have I done that I should be turned out?" "Nothing," replied the landlord, looking half ashamed, "I have not a word to say against you, but—but—the fact is there will be an election shortly, and it is most important that I should have a tenant who is able to support my interests." And so this poor woman has been turned adrift, and I think it is very possible may end her days in the Union, since she has been unable to obtain another farm for the same reason that lost her this one, not that she is ignorant of her business, or is an incapable, unworthy, or useless member of society, but solely and simply because she has not the right to a vote.'

'I have heard of many similar cases,' said Professor Wray, 'and I must say I should have thought Gladstone, after the speech he once made recognising this very hardship, would have taken up the question of women's suffrage more warmly; for, as a matter of justice, the case seems to me too clear to be disputed; and as a matter of expediency I maintain that it is no less so.'

'I do not deny,' replied Sir Henry, 'that you have used some strong arguments in proof of the justice of your claim, but I do not think its expediency is equally clear.'

'Name any difficulties that suggest themselves to you, I venture to say they will vanish on a fair examination.'

'In the first place, you claim, I believe, the right of voting only for widows and spinsters, now does it not seem to you a marked unfairness to the majority to create marriage thus a disability? Have not married ladies and would-be married men under these circumstances a just right to complain?'

'I do not think so,' said Madeline, 'the married and single are not different classes, a higher status for single women must in its reflex influence benefit all wives, since the disqualification then would be one, not of sex, but simply of circumstances; women-householders would fairly represent those not qualified by law to vote, whereas the disqualification being made one of sex alone is a sort of disparagement to womanhood generally.'

'It seems to me,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that this question of the suffrage owes its chief importance to the fact that it is the admission of a principle which must change the whole position of women for the better, educationally and socially, quite as much as in a mere political sense; a vote may matter little to any individual woman, and yet be of the most vital interest to the class she represents.'

'Before the passing of the last Married Women's Property Act,' said the Professor, 'enabling all wives to hold their own, and sue and be sued independently, I should have endorsed what you say, and been content to claim the vote for spinsters and widows only, waiting for an alteration in the marriage-laws, and feeling certain that sooner or later married women must receive equal justice, but I can see no valid reason now for a distinction, which seems to me neither just nor defensible.'

'Except,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that to include them would make the question of women's suffrage less acceptable to the

House; I believe if the enfranchisement of married women were passed, we should lose many of our chief parliamentary supporters, both amongst Liberals and Conservatives; to demand more at present would only be to increase opposition.'

'Naturally,' said Sir Henry; 'it would augment the difficulties in the way of granting the franchise to women tenfold; any man, for instance, might by assigning a house or cottage, or piece of land to his wife, make her a fagot-voter and so double his own power.'

'Is it necessary that she should on all occasions vote with him?' asked his sister.

'And if not, what then? Her whole vote would neutralise his, and he becomes practically disfranchised.'

'In dealing with the question of fagot-votes,' said Professor Wray, 'such a contingency would no doubt have to be considered, if they are right, then there is no reason why a man should not assign real property to his wife as much as to a friend or supporter whose vote he wishes to gain; if they are not right then the system of fagot-votes should be altogether abolished, and as regards the fear of rousing increased opposition, a temporary policy is scarcely worthy, I think, of a just cause.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'if we lost some half-hearted supporters by including married women in our claim, we should gain others who being lovers of consistency are now holding aloof; if marriage is such a crushing proof of imbecility that the only course is to disfranchise a woman as soon as she becomes a wife, then surely the partner in her guilt should share her punishment.'

'If you feel so strongly on this point, my dear,' said her brother, 'why are you giving all your energies to supporting a movement which certainly, according to the wording of this petition, does not include married women? It especially demands the suffrage only for those women who "in all matters of local government have the right of voting," and seeing that the question as to whether married women paying

rates and taxes might vote at municipal elections was decided in the negative by the Court of Queen's Bench so far back as 1872, it is clear that they are to have no part in your scheme.'

'Perhaps not at first,' said Madeline; 'I see from your point of view there is a certain want of consistency in the manner of our petition, but there is a homely proverb which says that "half a loaf is better than no bread," and when once single women-householders have the franchise it will not be long withheld, I think, from married women who are the possessors of real property; but before any married woman could be entitled to vote, lawyers say, I believe, that special legislation having reference to the marriage status would have to take place.'

'It only shows what crooked and onesided things men's ideas of justice have made in the shape of laws that this should be necessary,' said Mrs. Silverton.

'Very true,' said her husband, 'but do not annihilate *me*, I had nothing to do with it. It does seem unfair,' he continued, putting down the newspaper which he had raised in pretended alarm as a shelter from his wife's indignant glance, 'it does seem unfair that the wife whose property or labour helps to keep up the house and pay the rates and taxes should not have either a joint or separate vote; but the object, I take it, of the women's suffrage advocates is to obtain the greatest possible amount of good with the smallest possible amount of disturbance, and even though the granting a vote to married women may be long delayed I do not think it need be considered so very great a hardship, for where a married woman cares much about politics, in nine cases out of ten her husband's vote represents her views.'

'Mr. Silverton's opinions on this subject,' said his wife, with the serio-comic air which was her nearest approach to solemnity, 'are not unworthy of attention, he is in excellent training you perceive, and quite agrees with that sensible old man who, when asked on the eve of an election for whom he meant to vote, replied, "I dunno, I must ask my old lass."

"Your old lass! what has she to do with it?" asked his friend, "ain't you the head?" "Maybe, but she's the neck, and seemin' to me, 'tis the neck as turns the head."'

'Women are always making fools of men,' growled Major Knagge behind his newspaper, 'there's no doubt about that.'

'Nature so often forestalls them, I think,' said Mrs. Silverton in an aside to her brother, 'that they have very little chance.'

'You deserve to be pinched,' he whispered, with difficulty suppressing any signs of amusement which might call attention to words that would possibly appear personal. 'That is what I always say,' he added aloud, 'good and intelligent women have plenty of influence already without seeking it in the franchise.'

'So have all good and intelligent men,' said Madeline, 'but I never heard that made an argument against giving them the suffrage; it would be a very short-sighted policy thus to lose the votes of the ablest and most useful among them, and is it not the same in the case of women?'

'I don't know,' replied Sir Henry, 'I am rather inclined to think that all things considered women have more than their fair share of power already, that (as Demosthenes discovered long ago) measures which a statesman has pondered over a whole year may be upset in one day by a woman's influence.'

'And what sort of influence is this? Your argument, I think, is in favour of direct representation, not against it; for in the case of a thoughtful, conscientious woman, the extension of her influence will be for the benefit of every one, with a less scrupulous it would tend to endow her with a juster sense of her duties and responsibilities, not only in social but in civil life. Indirect influence, power without responsibility, are not on any grounds desirable, and this is all that women so far have been allowed to have in political matters.'

'You are quite right,' said the Professor, 'where a woman rules by an appeal to the reason, not to the emotions, her

influence is of the same quality exactly as that possessed by an able man, and is equally good; but the result of her influence in public affairs having been mostly indirect and irresponsible is that it has been considered quite legitimate for her to work upon a man's feelings inducing him to act oftentimes against his convictions, and seeing that the noblest of their sex would scorn to avail themselves of such influence as this, power has more often than not fallen into the hands of those least worthy to exercise it. Let women once recognise their responsibility in political affairs, let them exercise the suffrage, let them feel that they have public duties, and soon, I am convinced, the whole tone of the nation will be raised by the sense of responsibility, the widened political views of those who more often than not rule its rulers.'

'We always hear a great many pretty speeches,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'upon Woman's (with a capital letter) Woman's gentle influence, her vast and far-reaching power over men; it is an odd thing that with all this she has not yet in any part of the world succeeded in obtaining equal laws.'

'She has not often,' said Sir Henry, 'seriously tried; has very rarely looked, in fact, beyond personal interests and surroundings.'

'Then it is high time she should,' said his sister; 'although you *have* been soothing us to sleep for so many centuries, if you would only see things justly, you ought to be glad even for your own sakes that we are beginning to open our eyes and look about us at last.'

'I think if women want anything more than they have,' said Miss Wynter, 'there are quite enough feminine and legitimate ways of obtaining it without agitation, there are influences higher than mere political wire-pulling.'

'I am afraid Miss Wynter thinks,' said Sir Henry, 'like some one I read of the other day, that men must be amused somehow to keep them out of mischief, but that while politics offer a harmless and tolerably quiet occupation for grown up boys, they are not worth serious attention.'

'By no means,' replied the old lady, with polite gravity, 'I only say that politics are unbefitting a woman, I have observed that wherever they meddle with them they are almost sure to cause some mischief.'

'Irresponsibility again,' said Professor Wray; 'so long as women are told that they have nothing to do with public matters, so long will those who in their ordinary life would scorn to do a dishonourable thing, yet not hesitate to control unfairly the votes of their tradespeople, tenants, or dependents, so long will they be animated by personal considerations in short rather than public spirit, with the natural result that their influence instead of being beneficial is often injurious. It is here that the educating power of the franchise comes in, it gives that sense of trust and responsibility which must hinder any conscientious person from indirect or crooked courses, or from subordinating the general welfare to mere private ends. It is no wonder that women's tact has so often developed into manœuvering, not to say deceit, when those whose opinion they rely on have habitually told them that indirect influence answers best with them, that the less they seem to claim the more they will get, that their strength lies in appearing weaker than they really are. It is quite a different and much more wholesome influence than that of a Vivien, a Delilah, an Omphale, that women who claim the suffrage seek.'

'I am inclined,' said Mr. Silverton, 'to doubt the universal application of this "noble-education-of-English-politics"-theory, I am afraid more often than not they lead men rather into blind partisanship than into habits of philosophic thought, or to a practical turn of mind. We see frightful examples of this occasionally, especially in the party which happens for the moment to be in opposition to the Government, with diminished power; it seems to a great extent to throw off any strong sense of responsibility, all political morality and consistency being for the time subordinated to the one object, viz., the discomfiture of the administration. This remark, however, is merely by the

way, and has nothing to do with the question of giving the suffrage to women of property, there I am entirely of your opinion, but with this one exception, I must say I should like to see the franchise more limited rather than extended. What has the extension of the franchise, for instance, done for Ireland?'

'Without it, I have no doubt,' replied Professor Wray, 'that the country would have been even more unmanageable than it is at present. A Government which rests upon forces that have no natural outlet is in a dangerous predicament, for these forces are liable at any moment to break forth to its overthrow. When an election means not the will of the whole people, but of a favoured class, we may be sure that sooner or later explosive elements will be stirred up, and prove all the more violent and dangerous for having been long latent. When "Brer Fox, he lay low", you recollect, it always boded mischief.'

'You are an advocate for universal suffrage then?'

'To this extent, that I think every law-abiding citizen, whether man or woman, who has reached the age of twenty-one years, who can read and write, and possesses a few rudimentary ideas upon leading political questions, has a right to demand the privilege of citizenship; and in regard to the educational power of the franchise, I maintain that the consciousness of having to record their vote must, in the majority of cases, lead people to feel the responsibilities of citizenship, make them desire to learn something about the laws of their country, its constitution and its customs, and to be more inclined to take the side of law and order, than when they are permitted, nay encouraged, to live in carelessness respecting all these things.'

'But, but, my dear sir,' said Major Knagge, who for the last quarter of an hour had been absorbed by the attractions of the *Sporting and Dramatic News*, 'you must not forget that if—er—you encourage the weaker sex to meddle in politics, you bring a new element of—er—dissension into every house-

hold, for women will be sure to take the opposite side to their husbands, just to show their independence.'

'That theory,' said Professor Wray, 'followed out to its logical conclusion, would not only deny women a vote, but keep them from being allowed even to think independently; in fact, at this rate, the Indian squaw or the Eastern odalisque is the woman most fitted to make a man happy.'

'I think,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that it will be a most excellent think for men themselves, at least for such as are disposed to be overbearing, when the State acknowledges that the being they have been in the habit of looking upon as a mere cipher in political matters, is recognised as holding a place at least as important as their own.'

'But a great many men,' said her husband, 'do recognise independence of thought and opinion in the women of their family.'

'I am sure of that,' said Madeline; 'and I do not see why differences need necessarily cause discord, why a quiet or even a warm discussion should imply enmity; it is not so in the case of father and son, brother and brother.'

'They are not, I consider, parallel cases; with all due deference to the ladies present,' said Major Knagge, 'it is no use to deny the fact that women are—er—less tolerant naturally, more bigoted and positive than men.'

'I do not think that,' replied Professor Wray, 'except where their minds have been narrowed by a mistaken system of education; but even were they more naturally overbearing, more anxious to coerce those from whom they differ than we are, I cannot see that this would justify the keeping them always in leading-strings; why the mind and judgment of one sane adult human being should be put into the keeping of another I cannot conceive.'

'Certainly not,' said Sir Henry; 'but supposing, if I may venture on the assumption, supposing a wife is a bigoted Conservative, and her husband an equally staunch Liberal, would not her possession of a joint or independent vote place them in a somewhat awkward position?'

'So it seems rather an uncomfortable state of things,' replied Madeline, 'when the wife is a strict Roman Catholic, her husband, we will say, an Unitarian; they are not likely to find a church whose ritual and teaching is a convenient mixture of the two. There are princesses, as some writer says, whose religious convictions are kept in solution, as it were, to be precipitated when the particular belief professed by the prince they are about to marry has been clearly ascertained; but it would be thought the grossest tyranny to keep any ordinary woman from giving outward expression to her religious faith, even though it might happen to differ from that of her husband, and yet this is just what is done in politics.'

'If people are indifferent or easy-going,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'they will probably agree to differ; he will attend his church, she will keep to her's; he will vote for one party, she will vote for the other, all the time keeping up a perfectly good understanding; if the one is in earnest, the other indifferent, the latter will most likely fall gradually into a sort of acquiescence in the views of the former; and if they are naturally quarrelsome, you may be very sure they will not wait for politics to start them.'

'But how if they are both very much in earnest, taking a deep interest in all political and religious questions?' asked Sir Henry.

'In this case surely it must be madness on the part of either,' said Madeline, 'to marry one with whom it would be impossible to agree.'

'Exactly,' said Professor Wray, seeing that Sir Henry was silent and looked unusually serious; 'if husband and wife are agreed, you gain nothing by depriving the wife of a vote; if they are not agreed, then she is the victim of gross injustice in being deprived of the independent opinion to which she has surely as much right as her husband. But we are drifting from the point at issue, the question at present under discussion is the claim of *single* women who possess certain property qualifications.'

'But,' said Miss Wynter, 'I do not think the majority of women are inclined to sympathise with any such claim.'

'The thoughtless majority I grant are not, and why? Because in political matters, having been taught not to think for themselves, but to rely upon the opinions of some male friend or relative, they naturally have no confidence in their own judgment or powers; while dreading above all things to be thought unconventional, they give some colour of truth to the assertion of Voltaire, that ideas, like beards, are things mostly denied to women and young men.'

'The women disclaimers of any desire for political freedom,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'ought to be put in the same category as those of Utah, who signed petitions for legalising polygamy; or the inmates of an Eastern harem, who pity us for having to appear unveiled, and assert that their own secluded and frivolous life is the only desirable or proper one. I don't believe in them any more than in those unfortunate soldiers who, when it was proposed to abolish flogging in the army, were said to have "no objection to flogging."'

'For my part,' said Major Knagge, 'if women were to get the right of voting to-morrow, I do not believe most of them would exercise it.'

'Which would only prove the more conclusively,' said Professor Wray, 'their need of greater freedom and development; so far from making the indifference and opposition of such women an argument against the suffrage, you might just as reasonably urge that because the masses are ignorant of the laws of health we should not concern ourselves about sanitary matters.'

'I am afraid,' said Madeline, 'that a great many literary women and others, though they sympathise with us, yet have not the moral courage openly to advocate what they secretly believe in, because from opponents on all sides they hear such advocacy stigmatised as ungraceful and unfeminine.'

'I must acknowledge,' said Sir Henry, 'I have always thought myself that this claim to the franchise represents the

wishes of only a very small minority; that it is not only the silly and ignorant who are indifferent, but that a great many sensible women care nothing at all about it.'

'A large and daily increasing number of women,' replied Mrs. Silverton, 'are answering most emphatically that they *do* care. What else is proved by the huge meetings in London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Glasgow, Birmingham, Bristol, and other large cities? What else is meant by the petitions yearly presented to Parliament signed by thousands of women-householders and others, in every rank of life and in all parts of the country, entreating that justice may be granted them? Would women have done this if they had not cared for a vote?'

'Oh,' said Major Knagge, 'it is only the ultra strong-minded women who like making a stir, and so over-persuade the others to think it something very fine to clamour for their rights.'

'If by "strong-minded,"' said Professor Wray, 'you mean practical, sensible, self-reliant women, I do not see that these qualities unfit any one for the duties of citizenship, rather the contrary; and it cannot be denied that the advocates of women's suffrage have from the first had in their ranks not the empty-headed, the narrow-minded, the ignorant, but some of the most thoughtful and intelligent of their sex; of those, in short, whose voice best deserves to be heard, intellectual women, self-supporting women, philanthropic and benevolent women, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mrs. Norton, Mary Howitt, Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Grote, Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Somerville, Mrs. Jameson, Mary Cowden Clarke, Mary Carpenter, Frances Power Cobbe, Miss Thackeray, Edith Simcox, and many others, all of whom have publicly testified their sympathy with the movement.'

'Miss Austen throughout her works, too,' said Madeline, 'showed regret at many circumstances in the education and position of women; Lady Morgan passionately advocated the claims of her sex to reform; while Mrs. Siddons, though the idol of society, hoped "that there might be hereafter some

world where justice would be done to women." If any of these were alive now I do not think there is a doubt as to the scale into which their influence would be cast.'

'Are you sure about Mrs. Somerville?' asked Sir Henry.

'Quite; she regularly signed petitions to Parliament for the suffrage, and indeed was, I believe, up to the day of her death a member of the General Committee of the Woman's Suffrage Society.'*

'On the other hand,' said Major Knagge, 'there are quite as many, and more, who care for none of these things. I recollect a Member stated in the House not long since that after having voted for the Bill in 1870, he said to a lady friend, "I have been working for your cause to-day, trying to remove—er—the electoral disabilities of women," or something of that sort, to which she answered, "you might easily have been better employed"; and so he said, finding women themselves were indifferent, he did not—er—see the object of supporting the Bill in spite of them.'

'Drawing a general conclusion from one particular instance,' said Madeline, 'I think, Major Knagge, your friends are consistent in this, that their arguments are worthy of their cause, our opponents seem to have taken upon themselves the character frequently attributed to women, but which admirably fits its present position: I mean their frequent indulgence in irrelevancies, their inability or disinclination to follow an argument out to its logical conclusion, their attempt to rebut evidence by unsupported assertion; the fact is, I suppose, they are at their wit's end for a reply to a demand that is as logical as it is constitutional.'

'You are quite right,' said Professor Wray; 'any unprejudiced reader of the debates upon women's suffrage must favourably contrast the solid arguments, the serious spirit of its advocates from Stuart Mill downwards, with the reckless

* See Mary Somerville's *Personal Recollections*, pp. 344, 346; Harriet Martineau's *Society in America*, I., 150; Mrs. Jameson's *Communion of Labour*, 1856, p. 24; Lady Morgan's *Woman and Her Master*, &c.

statements of its opponents. That is a fair example which you gave us just now,' he continued, turning to Major Knagge—'because a few women are too selfish or careless or indifferent to care anything about these subjects we are told that no woman does, and that therefore the thing is undesirable.'

'I think if we inquire carefully,' said Madeline, 'what women it is who are indifferent to the suffrage, we shall generally find it is those of the privileged and sheltered classes, who know nothing and care less for their unhappy or struggling sisters—

"The owl he fareth well
In the shadows of the night,
And it puzzleth him to tell
Why the eagle loves the light."

they have wealth and like to be idle, they cannot understand this clamour for work; *they* are comfortable and happy, it must be a woman's own fault if she is not so; incense and flattery meet *them* at every turn, what in the world do others want more than they have? All this discontent and crying out for reforms is in very bad taste. *We* do not want this or that, why should you ask for it? In fact, such women are just as selfish and ignorant as the much ridiculed French princess, who was surprised that any one should complain of the poor wanting bread, when it would be so easy for them to supply its place with cake; whereas those who do not personally suffer from bad laws are just the ones who, if they have any right feeling, any sense of justice, ought to labour for those who do.'

'Quite true,' said Professor Wray; 'contentment becomes a vice when it means indifference to what does not affect us, but from which others are daily suffering.'

'I would rather myself,' said Madeline, 'be without privileges which are taken from the *woman* to be given to the *lady;* and supposing ninety-nine out of every hundred women were indifferent to the franchise, would that be any reason for denying it to the one who wished for it? Because during the last election at Liverpool only 36,000 men out of the 62,000

on the register took the trouble to vote, would it not have been thought a hardship if Liverpool on this account had been disfranchised? That the women in America who have obtained the franchise do value it is very certain. I was reading not long ago of a lady in Wyoming who in 1880 was spending the summer at a ranche seventy miles from her home. Though not fortunate enough to find any company which would have shortened her journey across the desolate prairie, she determined, nevertheless, not to let any such small matter as this deprive her of her vote, and so she set off and rode the whole distance, camping out, with no society on the trail but that of her horse, and finally arrived in time to record her vote.'

'If that is a typical case,' said Professor Wray, 'I do not wonder at the testimony of Governor Hoyt, who declared some time since, that during the fourteen years or more which have elapsed since the extension of the franchise to women in Wyoming, the great body of them have accepted the suffrage as a precious boon, and exercised it as a patriotic duty. He further states that so far from any of the predicted evils having resulted, they have better laws, better officers, better institutions, better morals, and a higher social condition than before.'

'I am quite tired,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'of hearing that women do not want the vote; it is just one of the silly arguments that used to be brought forward (and still is in Eastern countries) against letting women learn anything; "they do not wish it, it would unsettle their minds, disturb the equilibrium of their domestic relations," and so on; but it is much easier to assert these things than to prove them. I should like to know whether the patience of Indian squaws under a life of slavery, the readiness of Hindoo widows to be burnt, is any proof that a condition of things which brings about these little amenities is the most desirable of all others for them. No advocate of woman's suffrage, so far as I know, has ever suggested that those who are indifferent or object to vote should be compelled to do so; that those who prefer to lead colourless lives, full of petty interests, should be dragged from their

drawing-rooms to the polling-booths, as the *Times* on one occasion seemed to fear was imminent.'

'That throws some light,' said Sir Henry, 'upon the scruples of the American politician who would not advocate the suffrage because, though he approved of the principle of the thing, he was "again its enforcement." I suppose there *are* some people who think the bestowal of the franchise means that, *nolens volens*, they will have to vote. But are you not a little hard upon the women who do not agree with you?'

'Not half hard enough, I think,' replied his sister; 'it is disgraceful that a woman, because she is happy and comfortable, should be deaf to the cry of her suffering sisters, care nothing for wants that do not touch her, and sneer at the remonstrances of those men and women whose thoughts travel somewhat further than their own necessities and indulgences. It is very delightful to some natures, no doubt, to sit snugly ensconced in a comfortable easy-chair, with their feet resting on the footstool of "whatever is, is best"; but is it noble or generous, do you think, to refuse to "accept with tolerance of others' needs, what you do not need yourself"?'

'But,' said Miss Wynter, 'if the women who hold aloof from this movement are so selfish, do you think the motives of those who uphold it are any higher; they are many of them, I suspect, not above caring for power and notoriety?'

'Are active sympathies for one another's needs and duties,' asked Professor Wray, 'are a high sense of the duty owing to humanity, and a desire for power to defend oneself and others from injustice, selfish motives? When there is a passion for notoriety there are other and easier ways of satisfying mere ambition than by embracing an unpopular cause; and where is the selfishness in happy and prosperous women facing ridicule and detraction for the sake of those who are too ignorant to understand what they need, too weak to urge their claims?'

'Now tell us the truth,' said Professor Knagge, 'are not many of your heroines disappointed and embittered women who,

having failed in obtaining domestic happiness, have—er—ceased to believe in it?'

'So far from this being the case,' replied Professor Wray, 'these women (and I know most of those working in this cause) are generally in the best sense of the word "womanly" women, happy and honoured as wives, sisters, and mothers.'

'My idea of a womanly woman,' said Miss Wynter, 'is one who is gentle, retiring, unassuming in all her ways.'

'And no terms could better describe some of those I have in my mind.'

'What!' exclaimed Miss Wynter, raising one hand in protest, 'women who are always going about speaking from platform to platform.'

'That does not exactly convey a just idea of their life; the men of Coventry might just as well have accused the Lady Godiva of immodesty, as we of the nineteenth century bring a charge of undue boldness against those women who, their nature being too large to fit into a social strait-jacket, dare to do all that their conscience tells them is right, and in spite of natural shrinking and nervousness, venture openly to protest against what seems to them unjust.'

'There cannot be a greater mistake, I think,' said Madeline, 'than to suppose it is love of notoriety, rather than a sense of duty, which animates women who speak in public. A friend of mine, who has been in the habit of lecturing for years on behalf of women's suffrage, told me that whenever she has to speak in the evening, the thought of it so oppresses her for the whole day beforehand, that she can scarcely eat anything, and is nervous and frightened to a degree, that those who hear her quiet, sensible, unhesitating language upon the platform, would hardly think it possible.'

'Your friend, I do not doubt, my dear,' said Miss Wynter, 'may be actuated by a sense of duty, but I cannot help feeling it to be a very mistaken one.'

'A mind of any breadth,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'ought to be able, I think, to look beyond any mere personal feelings or con-

siderations in such a case, where it is a question of bringing a legitimate influence to bear upon subjects of vital importance.'

'If you start,' said Major Knagge, 'by assuming that women have a right to—er—mix themselves up in this sort of thing, but I do not—consider that they have any such right. Women have no concern with politics.'

'Did you ever,' said Madeline, 'hear Madame de Stäel's reply to Napoleon, who, being somewhat afraid of her political influence, said to her bluntly on one occasion, "I won't have women meddling with politics, women have nothing to do with politics." "Sire," she answered, "so long as women are liable to be guillotined on political grounds, so long have they a right to demand the reason why." In the same way, so long as women suffer from unjust laws still unrepealed, so long have they a right to make themselves heard in protest. We have fortunately outlived the days when women or men either were liable to be beheaded for political offences, however heinous, but the same principle applies; so long as a single law subjecting women to unnecessary sorrow and suffering remains upon our statute-books, it becomes, I think, not only our unquestionable right, but a positive duty for every woman to concern herself with politics. Do not questions dealing with education, with our hospitals, with the care of the poor, the regulation of women's work, the marriage-laws, and all matters of public health and morality intimately concern us? Surely it is our duty, instead of shutting ourselves within a round of narrow conventionalisms, to look into the evils that surround us, to trace them to their source, and do the little that we are able to remedy them.'

'No doubt,' said Sir Henry, 'it may do a great deal of good for some women to interest themselves in politics, many of the most intelligent in every age have done so; but then, as a rule I think, they have been contented with quietly discussing public questions amongst their own friends, I do not by this mean any disrespect to the lady-advocates of women's suffrage, for I take it on your authority that they are actuated only by the highest motives.'

'My dear fellow,' said Mr. Silverton, laughing, 'even your worst enemy could not accuse you of anything but the highest regard for the fair sex, but the principle of association is strong in most of us I suppose; because women have been chiefly known and loved in private life, we are haunted by a vague idea that she is only fitted for this sphere, and would be less lovable in any other.'

'Such a conclusion, I should say, was the result of experience,' exclaimed Major Knagge. 'When do you ever find anything like public spirit in a woman? It is not natural to them.'

'Exactly,' replied the Professor, 'their virtues have been encouraged to develop only on one side, and then we are told it is nature which has stunted them upon the other; but those who fear to emancipate women do nature an injustice, just as the timorous who dread free discussion and inquiry do truth an injustice.'

'Well,' said Major Knagge, 'whatever you put it down to, the fact is—is—er—palpable enough, that women know nothing about politics, and as a rule care less. Their minds were not—er—formed to grasp wide issues. How many women do you meet who are able to form an independent judgment? Not one in—in—in a hundred.'

'Is that a reason for disfranchisement?' asked Mrs Silverton, with a slight elevation of her strongly marked eyebrows, and a momentary flash of the eyes beneath them; 'if so, how many men-voters, in spite of the encouragement they have had to take an interest in public matters, have the sense or the courage to think for themselves? The game of "follow my leader" is what most of them excel in, I think. No doubt it is the only safe *rôle* for a great many,' she added, with a just perceptible but expressively contemptuous movement of the shoulders.

'Perhaps,' said Madeline, laughing, 'it is safer not to inquire how many gentlemen's minds would be, politically speaking, like the primeval earth, "without form and void," were it not for

the good offices of their favourite daily paper, which supplies them with good serviceable ideas that really, when dressed up in new clothing, look quite fresh and respectable.'

'Our sincere thanks,' said Sir Henry, bowing; 'would that your remarks were as undeserved as they are severe.'

'Oh, you must not think what I say is meant to be of universal application,' she replied, half apologetically, 'and in any case your ironical gratitude is due not so much to us as to Major Knagge for being such an efficient prompter.'

'Well,' said the gentleman in question, not ill-naturedly, for even he was not proof against the attractive personal qualities of the woman whom he looked upon as his chief opponent, 'I only hinted with—er—all due deference to the ladies present, that politics were not in their line.'

'Please give us something more definite by way of objection,' entreated Madeline, 'one cannot tilt against cobwebs.'

'Well, in the first place, women cannot, cannot, I should say, understand political questions,' and Major Knagge drew his fingers—a favourite action—through his iron grey hair which stood up in consequence, assuming a defiant attitude that was often in strange contrast to the inherent feebleness of his arguments.

'And what amount of understanding does the Government require from existing voters?' asked Madeline; 'Harriet Martineau, I suppose, who did perhaps more for political reform than any of her contemporaries, Madame de Stäel of whom it has been said that she was the most profound politician of her time, George Eliot, Mrs. Fawcett, or any of the many women-writers in our daily papers would be much less fitted to form a just judgment upon political questions than the small tradesman, who in reading is obliged to spell out his words, whose interest in political economy is bounded by what affects the market for the things he retails, who can just manage to add up a column of figures, and make what purports to be a signature instead of his mark upon official or business documents.'

'But my remarks—er—refer to the majority of women, not to such remarkable ones as you have named,' persisted the Major.

'Are the majority of women then so dull?' asked Professor Wray; 'it seems to me that while there may be some political questions which men understand better than women, there are quite as many whose merits women are the best fitted to judge of, and it is equally as bad for the country to deny due influence to the one as to the other. If the franchise were made to depend solely upon individual intelligence, I am inclined to think women would get the best of it; the moment that you raise an intellectual standard high enough to exclude all women, you will not only disfranchise most of your male-voters, but you must, to be consistent, shut the doors of both Houses against a large majority of their Members; but in point of fact the suffrage is never denied to men because they are dull or not highly intellectual; if a man is sane, keeps clear of felony, and has the requisite property-qualifications, that is all that is asked, therefore this is no argument against giving the vote to women; indeed, so long as the most illiterate and in many instances the most degraded men are practically declared competent to judge of political questions, it is preposterous to pretend that women are not so. As a telling commentary on this assumption: some three or four years ago, three prizes were offered for the three best essays upon a given political subject, the competition was open to the whole kingdom. By-and-by the prizes were awarded, and then, and not till then, it came out that they were all written by the same person, a woman of only twenty-four.'

'And where were her home duties all the time she was writing?' inquired Miss Wynter; 'I must say I think one of the chief dangers of giving women votes is that they will be tempted to neglect their higher duties.'

'It has yet to be proved, I think,' said Madeline, 'that domestic affairs are incompatible with a keen sympathy for large human and national interests; a woman must have a

very bad nature, I think, if the effect of a larger and freer life is to make her neglect the comfort and happiness of those dear to her, for politics or anything else. Because charity begins at home it does not follow that it ends there.'

'I do not see,' said Professor Wray, 'how any woman can have a higher mission than enlarging her interests and duties; and granted that home is often her chief sphere, then at least those branches of politics which demand the practice acquired in that sphere, education, the care of children and the poor, details of expenditure and so on, are surely no less her business. The greatest of political economists, John Stuart Mill,* declared "if we are to meet the demands of the age for a Government at once cheap and efficient, which shall cost little but shall give us all we ought to have for the money, the most vigilant and capable agents for making the money go as far as it can will generally be found among women."'

'As for the fear of our neglecting our domestic duties,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'being an argument against the franchise, I think if women cannot afford half an hour daily to read the paper and the same time perhaps once in every few years to record her vote, they are one and all as much to be pitied as that poor creature who not long ago was mentioned in the *Medical Record* under the heading of "Domesticity as a Cause of Insanity." She was aged forty-four, was the mother of eight children, and was suffering from acute mania. The husband, when asked if he could suggest any cause for her illness, exclaimed with much animation that he could not conceive any reason. "She is a most domestic woman," he said, "is always doing something for her children, is *always* at work for us all, *never* goes out of the house, even to church on a Sunday; never goes gadding about at the neighbours' houses or talking from one to another; has been one of the best of wives and mothers, and is *always* at home." The superintendent of the Hartford Retreat for the Insane, in commenting on the case said, "This appreciative husband

* See Speech at Women's Suffrage Meeting. London, 1869.

could hardly have furnished a more graphic delineation of the causes of his wife's insanity had he understood them ever so thoroughly."'

'Custom in this, as in many other cases,' said Professor Wray, 'has established unnatural distinctions between the sexes; men, as well as women, have duties to discharge to their families beyond providing a maintenance, and if women have so very much more work to do than we have, that they cannot spare the smallest amount of time for anything beyond their households, then I can only say that the world's labour is much more unfairly divided than I have always supposed; for no one ever suggests that the duties of the professional man, the merchant, or tradesman will suffer from his being swallowed up in the vortex of politics if he is allowed to vote; it is taken for granted that they have sense, and judgment, and, indeed, self-interest enough to look after all personal and private affairs, however much interested he may be in public measures; and have not women as much conscience as men? There is just as great a danger that the lawyer will forget his clients, the physician his patients, as that a mother will neglect her infant for any cause whatever, or her home and husband either; her instinctive love of home is so strong that as a rule I think she is much more apt to err on the other side. I have seen cases, indeed, where though there is no home worthy of the name, women will still cling to its shadow with a passionate and unreasoning affection, like the poor creature whom I read about in the paper the other day who, being asked why she and her family, one of whom had died of hunger, did not go into the Union, replied, "We did not like to leave our bits o' comforts." And what were these "bits o' comforts," a broken chair, and a board with some empty sacks upon it.'

'Your comparison of women's duties with those of most men is unanswerable, I think,' said Mr. Silverton, 'our constituencies would be small indeed if none were allowed to vote except those who had nothing else to do; and in point of fact

the purely domestic duties of women in the upper and upper-middle classes occupy a very much smaller portion of their time than those of the busy professional man; in fact, I am afraid the difficulty with many is to know what to do with their days.'

'And supposing women who are housekeepers,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'required to give all their energies, their sleeping and waking thoughts to that most interesting occupation, I fail to see on what ground that is made an argument for refusing the franchise to single women, and I really cannot see what inherent right men have to stigmatise our participation in politics as unfeminine any more than we have to decree that in them it is unmanly. It is a curious idea some men seem to have that it is necessary for *them* to interfere lest women should grow unwomanly.'

'After all,' replied Sir Henry, 'it is an indirect compliment, as I have said before, this fear that any change should make women different and less good and charming than they are at present.'

'I think it is the very height of presumption for them to venture to dictate at all in the matter,' said his sister, 'as if we were not the best judges of what we want; and I do not see that the municipal and school-board votes have had such an alarmingly deteriorating effect.'

'Quite the contrary,' said Professor Wray, 'and the influence of women would be equally advantageous in affairs of State. If the world were as good and happy in every respect as possible, then we might content ourselves and expect women to be contented with a one-sided system of government, but when such anomalies and evils exist in our Constitution as we find there, we may depend upon it it is because we have mistaken the road, that there is something wrong, and that the sooner we look about us and discover what it is the better. You remember it was Gorgo, the young daughter of Cleomenes, king of Sparta, who persuaded her father to spurn the bribe of the Ionian stranger. I believe we

should find women's influence invariably upon the side of morality. A well-known journal once stated its deliberate conviction that if women had votes it would be something like a death blow to the public-houses, and those who know what influence publicans have in returning or rejecting Members of Parliament may perhaps find in this statement some clue to the seemingly unreasonable opposition which the question of women's suffrage always arouses. Women have been called the conscience of the nation, and we cannot very well afford to dispense with this conscience in politics; if they are gentler, purer, keener of perception than men, I should not have said that these qualities are in our public life so abundant as to make women's influence superfluous in attempting to deal with the great moral and physical evils of society. Men form great projects often, sound in principle perhaps, but which frequently result in utter failure from a want of attention to details such as could never have occurred if women had had a share in planning them; we want the particularising faculty in our legislation as well as the generalising; women's tact also would do much to lighten the drudgery of men's public work, besides making it more effective, and for my part I plead guilty to

> "Preferring sense from chin that's bare,
> To nonsense throned in whiskered hair."

it is very bad policy not to use every species of available talent, and as Mill once remarked, "women are as much accustomed to make a very small sum go a very long way as Members of Parliament are to making very large sums go a very little way, and therefore it must be to the interest of political economy that their more direct influence should be brought to bear upon our legislation. In true family life we find the type of a perfect state, and a country deprived of its full share of women's influence is in as sad a plight as the household which owns no sister, mother, wife, or female friend." '

'Do you recollect,' said Madeline, 'Charles Kingsley, in his *Women and Politics,* after referring to the education and em-

ployment of women, says, "I have dealt principally with the franchise because I sincerely believe that it and it only will lead to their obtaining a just measure of the two former. As things stand now the average woman is more educated in every sense of the word than the average man, and therefore to admit women would be to admit a class of voters superior, not inferior, to the average. Women as a rule take a greater interest in social and moral reforms, while men are apt to neglect them for questions purely political."'

'I had no idea,' said Sir Henry presently, when the ladies having obeyed the call of the dressing-bell, he followed the Professor across the hall and up the broad staircase, 'I had no idea that Kingsley felt so strongly upon this subject.'

'I do not know how so staunch a lover of freedom, and one who respected women as he did, could feel otherwise,' was the answer.

'But,' replied Sir Henry, 'I should have thought it was precisely those who know that *they* would always consider women's interests before their own, who feel that there is little, if any, need for women to assert themselves, that they may safely leave things in our hands.'

'It will be time enough to use this as an argument when our laws are in every respect as favourable to women as to men; you may depend upon it that in spite of good intentions on the part of the stronger, an unrepresented class will always be in some sense a neglected class—as Jacob Bright once remarked, it is like trying to drive a heavily loaded waggon without horses, to attempt to pass a woman's bill through the House of Commons without their having votes.'

'But do you think women are really to be called a "neglected class"?'

'Yes, I speak advisedly, it is justice for the many, not gallantry for the few, we want; has there been no injustice where laws exist which, when husband and wife cannot agree, allow the mother no voice in the disposal of her children; is there no injustice when a man who has half murdered his wife

may be let off with a fortnight's imprisonment; is there no injustice in the laws I was speaking of the other day, which protect the immoral man at the expense of his no more guilty companion in sin; is there no injustice as between man and woman in the laws relating to property?—But we must not loiter now, I suppose—*Au revoir.*'

CHAPTER XI.

'The sanctity of the home is the safeguard of the nation, if you decree a separation between the home and the nation, if you affirm that one half of the nation is to be shut up in the house, and excluded from any participation in large interests, take care that the ornaments of the home do not become mere ornaments, pictures to be gazed at and worshipped, not living powers to purify and hallow.'

Rev. F. D. Maurice, *Spectator*, *March* 5, 1870.

'The more we interrogate common-sense, the less reason we find for excluding women from political existence.'

Condorcet.

'For my part I should not be unwilling to compound for the political privileges which are denied to women. . . . . Let there be a measure brought in to exempt us from the payment of those rates which qualify every gaping clown to exercise the franchise. It will not be a dignified way of getting out of it, but it *will* be a way of getting out of it, and one which will be logical and convey some solace to our wounded pride. I, for one, am willing to compound.'

Mrs. Oliphant, *Grievances of Women*, *Fraser*, *May*, 1880.

'Half the follies, half the brutalities, committed by nations for which they have paid the price in long arrears of punishment and suffering would have been prevented if they had been presented to the ordeal of consideration by the right-minded and clear-headed women of the land.'

General T. Perronet Thompson, 1841.

CHAPTER XI.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE (CONTINUED).

'THE worst of this sort of thing,' said Major Knagge, who, unable to dismiss the afternoon's conversation from his mind, scarcely waited for the soup to be removed before taking up again the argumentative weapons which during the last three quarters of an hour he had been carefully burnishing. 'The worst of this sort of thing is, that one never knows where it will end; these women-questions I see, if we do not take care, will—er—launch us on—on—an ocean of difficulties.'

'The same thin-end-of-the-wedge argument,' said Professor Wray, 'was, I recollect, brought against the repeal of the test act, against household suffrage, the ballot, the corn laws, the abolition of Church rates, measures now universally acknowledged to have been necessary, but which at the time were by many looked upon as dangerous precedents. To dread the legitimate use of a thing for fear of its being abused is, as we all know, common enough, there is always a certain section of the community which thinks that one step forward is going to revolutionise the world; the spider thought heaven and earth were coming together when the housemaid's broom descended on his web, but I never heard that any widespread evil was the result. The opinions of Copernicus, now everywhere received, were once the object of satire upon the stage; it is within the recollection of people now living that the idea of travelling twenty miles an hour was once by a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* scouted as ridiculous. There were prophets when the slave-trade was abolished who declared that it would be the ruin of the British Empire; when

Sir Samuel Romilly proposed to do away with the death-penalty for petty theft, certain voices were heard exclaiming that it would establish a precedent by which the common-law of England would be endangered; even so essentially utilitarian a measure as the introduction of street-lamps in the reign of Charles II. met in some quarters with fierce opposition; many theories and useful inventions again, which now are matters of common and unquestioning acceptance, would a hundred years ago have consigned their originators probably to a lunatic asylum, therefore one scarcely ought to wonder perhaps at meeting with objections to the demand for woman's suffrage, reasonable though it may seem to us.'

'Still,' said Madeline, 'I cannot see that it is possible to bring forward any good reason for opposing it.'

'Well,' replied Major Knagge, 'it is very plain to me that if women obtain the suffrage, their next demand will be for a seat in Parliament, and—and—and once there, you may depend upon it, they won't stop short of the woolsack, or the Speaker's chair.'

'A fearful idea, is it not?' said Madeline; 'still many thoughtful persons, I believe, hold that even here no arbitrary exclusion should be exercised, and at any rate the right to vote, as for instance in the case of the clergy, does not as a matter of course involve the right to be elected, though, no doubt, in a country where the highest post in the realm can be filled by a woman, it is an anomaly to assert that others of her sex are unworthy, or unfit, for posts of less importance, while *one* woman may negative the voice of both Houses to pronounce all others of her sex congenitally unfit for the smallest fraction of direct political influence; when abbesses were summoned by Henry the Third and Edward the First to sit in Parliament, and peeresses were ordered by Edward the Third to appear by proxy, it is evident there was then no idea of sex-disqualification being part of our Constitution.'

'There is nothing more absurd,' said Professor Wray, 'in a peeress sitting in the House of Lords, or any cultivated woman

in the House of Commons, than in the Queen presiding in Council, it is only custom which gives this impression.'

'We shall have the ladies using hair-producers next,' said Major Knagge, 'in order to grow—er—beard and whiskers; the only way in which women are fitted to rule, I maintain, is through the deference we pay them; where was there ever one who could hold authority by—by—by force of her own personality?'

'Fourrier, in his statistics of monarchs,' replied Madeline, with a quietness that was in marked contrast to the Major's growing excitement, 'says that there have been seven commonplace kings for one great one, seven great queens for one commonplace; Semiramis and Boadicea must have had some force of character, while I think if you compare Elizabeth of England, Isabella of Castille, Catherine of Russia, or Maria Theresa, with most of their predecessors or successors, or our Queen with any other monarch of the house of Hanover, I think you cannot help recognising the truth of his remark.'

'But did you never notice,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that historians throw a sop to the Cerberus of masculine vanity by imputing the success of these queens to their men-advisers.'

'Forgetting,' added the Professor, 'that the power of choosing able Ministers is half the art of governing. Mill says his experience at the Indian Office taught him that women have a peculiar aptitude for administration, that in the East where male chieftains were often plunderers and tyrants, or idle and voluptuous, women-rulers in several cases had shown distinguished talent.'

'But,' said Sir Henry, 'is there any connexion between the duty of a sovereign and that of a subject?'

'I should say there is the most direct analogy,' replied Professor Wray, 'between a sovereign's choice of a Minister and a subject's choice of a representative; in fact, as we have said before, if you make the franchise depend upon inherent ability, you must at once disfranchise more than half your

men-voters, and admit without question a large number of women.'

'But women,' said the Major, 'are too hysterical, too excitable, to be trusted generally in responsible positions.'

'Where they have displayed these qualities,' replied Professor Wray, 'it has been rather than anything else, I think, a proof of nervous energy run to waste, which directed to a definite end might have proved of inestimable service; given a fair chance, women have organized charities, edited journals, filled professors' chairs with honour, written valuable works on philosophical, social, and political subjects; look at the disorder and misery which Florence Nightingale found reigning in our hospitals at the Crimea, and at the amazingly short time in which she brought *Kosmos* out of what appeared almost hopeless *Chaos;* or at the similar organizing power displayed by the American women in mitigating, so far as was possible, the evils of their sad war. The women on our School Boards again, and in other positions of trust, are daily proving themselves as capable as the best man amongst us, of sober judgment, steady application, breadth of view, and able administration. What could any Member of Parliament do more? But this is not the question at issue; if it should prove desirable for women to take their part in legislation, it will come sooner or later in the natural course of events; but I do not see that we are called upon at present to decide for or against.'

'But it surely behoves statesmen,' said Sir Henry, 'to look at the ulterior as well as the immediate consequences of any proposed measure.'

'In many instances, no doubt, it is so, but I cannot see that far off possibilities have anything to do with a question of simple justice; Lord Palmerston was no short-sighted politician, and it was a maxim of his, "Yield to-day that which is reasonably asked, and resist to-morrow that which you will be right in resisting; but do not put yourself in the wrong to-day, merely for fear of to-morrow."'

'Besides,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'I, for one, do not grant that women have any ulterior aims beyond the desire for more direct influence and increased usefulness; it might, perhaps, be worth while to remind those gentlemen who are nervous on this score, that if women *were* to be as eager for a seat in Parliament as they are themselves, they could not obtain it unless elected by a large number of men, whose judgment it would be very remiss in them to question.'

'These fears,' said Madeline, 'are in short as illusory as those of the man in the Eastern story, who upon his neighbour's finding a horse-shoe began to wail and lament; when asked the cause of his grief, he replied, "My neighbour may one day find a horse to fit this shoe, my little child may go so near it as to be kicked, a feud may thereupon arise between our two families, and many lives may be lost"; even some of our professed friends grow timid through their visions of an imaginary future; "we do not deny the fitness of those for whom the franchise is claimed now," I have heard them say, "but if they get it, others whose fitness is not so obvious may claim the same privileges."'

'Another objection that I have often heard,' said Sir Henry, 'is that women are one and all under the influence of the clergy, who as a body are not always the safest advisers in political matters.'

'An argument,' said his sister, 'almost as far-fetched as that of Mr. Newdegate, who discovered at one time, I believe, that giving votes to Englishwomen meant increasing the power of the Jesuits.'

'I am no sympathiser with the Newdegate school, as you know,' was the reply; 'but from a Liberal standpoint, I can quite see the danger that lies in undue clerical influence, which, as a rule,—though there are exceptions, I admit—is in favour of absolutism, and opposed to freedom of thought and discussion.'

'I think you scarcely do justice,' said Madeline, 'to the liberality of a large proportion of the English clergy; where

they are inclined to be narrow, I think it is only because in many cases they have, like women, been shut out by temperament or circumstances from the free exercise of their judgment, from the unbiassed and far-reaching examination of debated questions; and surely if there were anything narrowing or hurtful in the amount of influence they possess, the remedy lies not in leaving things in the hands of the clergy, but in encouraging women to think for themselves, and take an active part in the affairs of life, as well as in giving them the scientific training which will balance the more credulous and sentimental side of their nature.'

'I do not think,' said Professor Wray, 'if you take into consideration the sort of limpness and timidity which seem to have been the end of women's training in the past, that we have any proof of their courage and love of liberty being less than that of men. In former days, when submission to the priesthood was held a religious duty, the majority of men were decidedly more under clerical sway than are women at present; let the same widening influences which have emancipated men be brought to bear more fully upon women, and we shall soon find them equally unwilling to blindly surrender their judgment to any one, however great a claim he may have upon their respect and sympathy. Indeed, we have already had some demonstration of this in the fact that, some years since, out of twenty-four women now sitting on the School Boards in various parts of England, who may be taken as types of the more intellectual and thoughtful of their sex, three voted in favour of a purely secular education, fourteen were for undenominational teaching in religious matters, and only seven were in favour of denominational instruction, which does not look much like servile submission to clerical influence.'

'Really,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'I do not think the weakest or most superstitious of women could cling more to the worn-out remnants of ecclesiastical ascendency, or to obsolete and meaningless forms than do our wise lawgivers themselves in many instances.'

'You refer to the question of the oath, I suppose,' said Madeline; 'but I think the influence undoubtedly possessed by the clergy over a large number of women has been due to the fact that they are the only men who, as a class, have recognised us to some extent as fellow-workers and fully acknowledged our moral responsibility. When other men take equal pains to interest women in subjects outside a purely domestic sphere, they will command, I have no doubt, equal sympathy.'

'You see you cannot deny my proposition as to clerical influence,' said Sir Henry.

'I only deny that it is no reason for refusing women the suffrage, but rather a further argument in favour of granting it. You dread the revived influence of clericalism; but if we inquire where the people are most ignorant, the priests most powerful, we shall find it is in those countries which have the least political liberty. Has not experience proved that the granting of political rights is symbolical of a widened range of interests, and is therefore the thing of all others likely to encourage independent thought and action?'

'True,' said the Professor; 'liberty is the chief condition of a worthy and desirable existence, and women, as well as men, are endowed with will and individuality that these qualities may be used, subject only to restraint when they infringe upon the liberties of others. Do you think it consistent with true Liberalism,' he continued, turning to Sir Henry, 'to oppose this movement on any grounds whatever?'

'I am not quite sure,' was the reply, 'whether advanced Liberals have not better grounds for their opposition than any others, in the fact that the majority of women are undoubtedly Conservatives.'

'And what becomes of your theories of representative government and individual liberty, Harry?' asked Mrs. Silverton. 'I should have thought it an offence against first principles to be influenced by the question of how any measure is likely to affect the fortunes of either one party or the other. —Oh, it is commonly done, I know (so much for men's idea of

political morality); but all I say is, if you allow that women have a right to make this claim, then it is unworthy and unjust, it is putting expediency in the place of right, to urge such considerations.'

'No doubt,' said the Professor, 'this question is far too commonly treated as one to be considered on grounds of expediency alone, as if right and wrong, justice and injustice, had nothing to do with it. Surely women have as much right as we to hold Liberal or Conservative or any other views without having their vote withheld on that account. For my part, if I knew the majority of women were Conservatives, and if the sole hope of the Liberal party for the moment lay in shutting them out, Radical as I am, I would scorn a power gained by ignoring the opinions and wishes of half the nation.'

'This has never been a party question, and I am glad of it,' said Madeline; 'but I think those Liberals who entertain any fears upon this subject would, in the event of our obtaining the franchise, soon find that they had been mistaken. Women have suffered too much from needless delay not to feel strongly on the subject of reform; and though, like men, they hold every variety of political opinion, not being, as I once heard suggested, run into moulds that, like candles, can be made into "long-threes" or "short-sixes," whichever their owners please, my own humble opinion is that there would be just as much chance amongst women-voters of a Liberal as of a Conservative majority.'

'I believe it was by way of testing this very question,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'that a few years ago a kind of census was taken of the political opinions of the women at Newnham, when only five, out of eighty or ninety, proved to be Conservatives.'

'But it is women-householders,' replied her brother, 'and not women-students to whom it is proposed to give votes.'

'That is true,' said the Professor; 'but amongst women-guardians again the majority are Liberals, while of those on the

School Board, with very few exceptions, the same may be said, and they mostly owe their election to women-voters.'

'I quite agree with you,' said Mr. Silverton, 'that were every woman in the country a Conservative, a Liberal Government which owed its existence to keeping them out would not be an honest one.'

'The Conservative leader in the house of Crag's Nest is emphatic,' said Sir Henry; 'would it be impertinent to inquire how much of his warmth is due to party interests, how much to the interests of women?'

'I will vouch for Fred's singleness of mind on this point,' replied Mrs. Silverton; 'but as Madeline says, Harry, this is not a party question, and I do not see why politics should be dragged in except where they affect or are affected by the case in point.'

'But, my dear, pardon me for interrupting you,' remonstrated her brother, 'I should have said the question as to which way women are likely to vote merits at least discussion.'

'Has it not been both discussed and disposed of?'

'Well, whether women are Liberal or Conservative does not much matter,' said Major Knagge; 'but this I say, and this I maintain, that on—er—either one side or the other their votes are not likely to be of much benefit to the country until they prove that there is something like patriotism or—or—public spirit about them.'

'The higher you raise men or women the further they will see,' said the Professor; 'it is neither logical nor just to deny women the right of giving expression to their opinions by a direct vote, and then to blame them for their small interest in current events, it seems to me but natural that those who are excluded from politics should take a languid interest in them. I put it to you, would any man feel acutely measures affecting the political and social condition of his country, as apart from those which affect him personally, if, while called upon to pay taxes, he might have no voice in the distribution of his money, take no part in public affairs; and can the

majority of women be expected to keep up a keen and lively interest in things which they are always told are out of their province? Can devotion to public service be reasonably expected from those who have no public duties to perform, and no emoluments or honours to be won? And yet, in spite of this, it is not possible to go over the pages of history without finding the names of many women who have not only been public-spirited in the ordinary sense of the term, but whose one ruling passion was the love of their country; I refer to such women as Zenobia, Boadicea, Joan of Arc, the maid of Saragossa, Madame Chrzanowska and other Polish women, Madame Roland, Charlotte Corday; and to go back to earlier times, we find many examples of pure, disinterested patriotism amongst the Roman and Spartan women. You recollect how when Rome was besieged by Brennus, it was saved by the women giving up all their golden ornaments for ransom; after the battle of Cannæ, again, the women sacrificed all their gold and jewels. No doubt you have read, too, how in the Middle Ages, when Cyprus was besieged by the Turks, the women came in crowds to the rescue, mingled with the soldiers, and fought gallantly in the breach, and so were the means of saving their country. The Dutch women in the revolution of the Seven Provinces were scarcely less enthusiastic, and I do not think, if put to the proof, we should find our countrywomen one whit behind them.'

'But,' said Major Knagge, 'we don't want—er—Amazons.'

'And I should not say that the lady advocates of women suffrage have much ambition in that direction; we do not, as you say, want women soldiers, but we do want their peaceful influence to enable us to do away with fighting altogether, that the money spent in useless wars may be more profitably employed. War is now felt by all reasonable and good men to be a painful anomaly, and I believe that in enfranchising women we should gain immense power on the side of peace, and so strengthen ourselves socially and commercially. Humanity must still be low down in the scale of progress when,

amongst so-called "civilised" countries, justice can only be upheld by maintaining at vast expense large bodies of men whose sole profession it is to fit themselves for the effectual slaying of their brother-man. I believe that by admitting women to our councils we rise one step higher in the scale of order *versus* anarchy; that, as the moral law increases in influence, so the law of the fist loses its power; that as respect for the law grows, so belief in mere brute-force must decline. Unfortunately the word patriotism is too often used by us as a synonym for mere ambition and greed for conquest, and we do not want any further development of this sort of patriotism among men or women either.'

For some moments no one spoke; probably it was expected that Major Knagge would as usual have an answer of some sort ready; but if there was one thing he liked better than argument it was his dinner, and at this moment he was busily occupied, and partly, perhaps, the silence was due to the impression made by Professor Wray's words, for every one looked thoughtful. Sir Henry, however, could not long be solemn, unless under very exceptional circumstances.

'For my part,' he said, 'I think vicarious patriotism is the sort of thing to go in for, such grand enthusiasm as nerved Artemus Ward to declare that he would spend every drop of his relations' blood, and every drop of his wife's relations' blood, in the cause of his country; that is something like public spirit; when did you ever hear a woman profess such sentiments as that?'

'*Never!*' said Major Knagge, who for some reason was under the impression that Sir Henry had dealt a crushing blow to the enemy. 'I have understood that some have had the—er—audacity to assert that all the burdens of citizenship fall upon women equally with men, but I should like to know how that is to be proved; they—they are not called upon to defend their country, and since they are not liable to bear arms, what right have they to vote on questions of war and peace?'

'This right,' said Madeline, 'that their interests are as seriously involved, they are as vitally concerned in the preservation of peace as are their fathers and husbands and brothers. Do not women suffer at least as much as men from the horrors and evil results of war, and have we not equal right, then, to inquire into the causes for which a Government makes war?'

'No doubt,' said Professor Wray, 'it requires more real heroism to endure patiently the sacrifice of lives dearer than their own, more sustained courage to attend the wounded and the dying, than under the influence of temporary excitement to face the enemy. Soldiers, I think, should be the last to forget that it is to a woman—Isabella of Spain—the world owes the establishment of the first regular camp hospitals; that it was a woman—Florence Nightingale—who, as Kinglake says in his *History of the Crimean War*, brought a priceless reinforcement of brain-power to the nation at a time when the brains of Englishmen had given signs of inanition; the same, or almost as much, may be said for thousands of other women; and if a nation *must* fight, which is the more worthy part of war, the love of glory so-called, aptitude for the fiendish art of wholesale slaughter, or the courage which women have shown all the world over in rescuing the wounded and nursing back to life, and to the service of their country, those of her sons whom national vanity or ambition had condemned to premature death?'

'That is as it may be,' replied Major Knagge; 'but it is an old, and so it seems to me very just—er—position, that those incapable of defending their country are not fit to rule it.'

'In that case, nothing short of deposing the Queen would suit you, and to be logical, you must exclude not only women, but every physically weak male-voter, let him be ever so highly intellectual or useful in a public or private capacity; such men, for instance, as Pope, Milton, Cowper, Huber, Prescott, Thierry, even Darwin and John Stuart Mill, would scarcely in a general conscription have been called out; but no one has ever suggested that they ought on this account to

have suffered legal subjection and disfranchisement. Until we refuse a vote to every man who is not broad, and strong, and active enough to pass the army test, this weakest of arguments will not stand a moment's criticism.'

'Every one knows,' said Madeline, 'that it is not from the physically strongest that the greatest actions spring. Besides, it is the taxpayers who provide the sinews of war; a nation of men could no more carry on a war alone than a nation of women, for half of them at least would have to be told off for hospital and home duties. I must say, I do not think the supposed connexion between fighting and voting will bear analysing.'

'In earlier and less civilised times,' said Professor Wray, 'when war was the normal condition of things and peace was rare, there being no less barbarous way of settling difficulties, and when, owing to general lawlessness, it was next to impossible for women to administer their own property, it perhaps seemed more in the natural order of things that they should not have votes; but times have changed, the muscles of gladiators are no longer considered the noblest attributes of humanity, physical strength has ceased to be made the basis for precluding men from authority, and therefore it cannot logically be made a motive for disqualifying women. If mere brute strength had still anything to do with political sovereignty, then the physical force of the country, the soldiers, sailors, and policemen, should certainly not be prevented from voting. To show the absurdity of making physical strength a test of moral fitness, Professor Huxley, who once said that wherever it came to a question of competition for any office, women must, on account of their inferior strength, be outstripped, himself entered into competition with a woman—Elizabeth Garrett, now Mrs. Garrett Anderson—for a seat on the London School Board; the lady went in at the head of the poll, while the Professor, who was also elected, though with a much smaller number of votes, was afterwards compelled to resign, the work being too much for his strength.'

'I remember,' said Major Knagge, 'that we discussed this

theory on our road to Barnstaple the other day, but I—er—regret to say, my dear sir, I am no nearer agreeing with you now than I was then. I consider the fact that men have naturally a power, a force of domination denied to—er—the other sex, is proof enough that women were always intended to be, and always will be, in a state of subjection; it is contrary to nature for women to be invested with power; men are born to be the leaders, and therefore naturally the—er—the law-makers.'

'You may depend upon it,' replied the Professor, 'that intellectual and moral force either in man or woman is the only safe guide for a civilised community; these points being equal the want of practical strength should be only a motive for giving increased rather than less power. What notion of fair play can men have who, knowing that in everything, except muscular force, there is no more difference between man and woman than between a lion and a lioness, or between any male animal and the female of the same species, have yet based on this one difference the unwarrantable assumption that strength is the main excellence in a human being, and that intelligence exists in the same ratio? Such a palpable fallacy, one would have thought, ought to have exploded long ago, but we are too indolent to look things fairly in the face, too selfish not to cling to the idea that it is man's particular province to rule all things absolutely, women included, that she has no right to rule herself or live as pleases her.'

'I should be very sorry to hold any such theory as that,' replied Sir Henry; 'no doubt a great many women are already well-fitted for the political emancipation which sooner or later they are certain to obtain, but I doubt if the times are ripe yet for the change.'

'That is just what the upholders of slavery declared,' said Madeline, 'the negroes were not yet fit for liberty, if they had been listened to, the negroes would not to this day be considered fit for liberty; there is always, surely, a middle course between a precipitate and thoughtless change and the determination to find nothing good in what appears to be without precedent.'

'Do you recollect,' said the Professor, 'Macaulay's answer to those who urged that the Jews were not fit for political equality—"What right have we," he said, "to take this question for granted? Throw open the doors of the House of Commons, throw open the ranks of the Imperial Army before you deny eloquence to the countrymen of Isaiah, valour to the descendants of the Maccabees." In the same way we say of women, give them a chance before you declare them unfit for the same liberties that men enjoy, it is only in the working that a thing can be fairly tried; why repudiate a strength yet untested, why refuse the help of good heads, capable hands, tender hearts, in dealing with our social complications, in the perpetual struggle against sin and suffering. You say there is no hurry, but to delay justice is to commit a wrong.'

'But,' said Sir Henry presently, 'I have been thinking that if you admit women's claim to the suffrage you make them not only an equal but a greater power in the State than men, which would not be fair.'

'How?'

'Seeing that they outnumber us, they would have it in their power to outvote us on any question they pleased, and as we go on extending the franchise, so women will get more than their fair share of political influence.'

'You agree with me, I know,' said Professor Wray, 'in thinking that the wider our constituencies, the juster and more impartial will be our laws; but even with manhood suffrage limited, as I hope to see it by an educational test, there is no cause, I think, for any such fear as you express arising out of women's numerical superiority, since the question becomes then one, not of mere numbers, but of individual intelligence and fitness, and certainly where, as at present, property is made the basis of electoral rights, there is no occasion to trouble about the preponderance of the feminine element, now so unjustly ignored, to the detriment of the State, and the injury of a large class of the community.'

'But you can hardly consider women a class, can you?'

'They seem to have been always legislated for as a class at any rate. But what is it that constitutes a class? Jevon's definition is that a class should possess some distinct marks different from those possessed by things in general. Now in many ways women's needs are different, their interests distinct from those of men; all women have some interests in common which none but women share, and the more the fact of sex is emphasised, the stronger does this argument become. If women are like men in mental attributes, if their nature is identical, they certainly have the same right to political influence, and it is wrong to enact laws without their concurrence; if they are unlike, men have still less right to legislate for beings whom they cannot thoroughly understand.'

'But I think,' said Miss Wynter, clearing her voice, and gently smoothing down the lace lappets of her cap, 'I think women should have enough confidence in men's sense of justice and the honour in which the best of them hold women, to be sure that their interests are virtually represented without their having a vote.'

'Virtual representation too often,' said Professor Wray, 'means misrepresentation, or how is it that the worst laws and the last to be improved are those relating to women? I am sure no one who honestly looks into the existing state of social order or *dis*order can assert that women's interests in education and work in her pecuniary, civil, and political condition, have been generally understood, fairly considered, or justly provided for.'

'Many noble and unselfish men, I believe,' said Madeline, 'try to live up to the good old rule, "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you." I suppose they have never thought of asking themselves how *they* would like a legislature not only consisting exclusively of women, but returned only by women-voters? Would they not think that however well-meaning women might be, they could not possibly see things from a man's standpoint; and this reversed is precisely

the condition of things under which women are said to be virtually represented.'

'No doubt,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'the great majority of women have the tenderest regard for the interests of their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons; but I wonder if any man living would take this as a valid reason for refusing him a voice in the management of his own affairs. When one looks at the existing laws concerning women, and then is told in the same breath that they need not desire a vote, that their interests may safely be trusted in the hands of men, it reminds me of the husband who, a few years ago, murdered his wife, and when asked what induced him to commit such a crime, replied, "because he loved her so much!" I fancy, poor woman, if given her choice, she would hardly have exacted such a proof of devotion; it is just possible she might have preferred to live, and out of his strong affection he might, I think, have made it optional. Affection and regard take queer forms sometimes.'

'I am quite sure,' said Madeline, 'that our legislators mean to be just and generous towards women, but however well-intentioned they cannot be expected to have any true conception of the needs of women, and therefore it is that they have made, in so many instances, such profound mistakes. When such legalised misery as one sometimes sees and reads about has become impossible, it will then, I think, be time enough to say that our laws as between men and women are impartial.'

'It is impossible to deny that where the interests of the two,' said Professor Wray, 'have come into collision, those of the latter have always been made subservient to those of the former; in fact, men are neither pure, wise, nor good enough to legislate, uncontrolled, for women.'

'If we were sufficiently represented,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'to secure just legislation, I should like to know how the marriage and property laws could have continued unmolested in their injustice for so many centuries?'

'Well, you cannot deny, my dear,' said her brother, 'that the new 'Married Women's Property Act' grants everything that

the most exacting could require ; indeed, I have heard men, selfish ones, no doubt, grumble much as if personally injured, that when they marry they will not have the right to manage their wife's affairs.'

'Perhaps you do not know,' replied the Professor, 'that this very Bill lay for long years on the shelf, and it was not until women began to agitate for political rights that the inequalities between the laws for men and women were noticed ; and this one in especial being pressed upon the attention of the public was finally taken up by the Lord Chancellor, and the Married Women's Property Act passed into law at last with a rapidity that was almost startling. But is it not shameful to think of, that up to that time a married women, whatever her age, her intelligence, her business capacity, was reduced to the position of a child ? Though she might be in every way better fitted to manage her own affairs than the man she married, though he might be ignorant, incapable, dishonest, from her wedding day she became legally an infant to be placed under due restraint, her property, her personality, her very existence merged in that of her husband, even her very wedding presents becoming his to do with as he pleased. Feeling the anomaly, inconvenience, the injustice of such a state of things, the wealthy and powerful classes found means by an expensive process of saving their daughters' property from being confiscated for the crime of marriage by having settlements ; by going to law in fact they were enabled to evade the law, but there was no such protection for the working classes, or the women of small means.'

'That seems to me, I must confess,' said Sir Henry, 'to have been very unfair.'

'I believe many men,' said Madeline, 'are alive to the particular injustice of certain laws affecting women, I wish they were equally alive to the fact that by refusing them the suffrage they are perpetuating the evil ; we desire the vote for precisely the same reason that other disfranchised classes have desired it, namely, that those who remain disfranchised amongst a free people can never hope or expect to obtain complete justice.'

'It is one of the leading principles of political science,' said Professor Wray, 'that the rights and interests of any individual are only secure from disregard by his being himself in a position to protect them; and if true of men, it is even more so of women, for the weaker people are, the greater is their need of protection; as Lord Brougham once acknowledged, the laws about women were so bad that they needed total reconstruction, and many of these avowedly unjust laws still remain unrepealed. To any one who inquires why these evils have remained so long unredressed, the answer is, "Because they have not been looked into;" to the question "Why have they not been looked into?" the only reply is, because women have not been directly represented, for no defence is like self-defence, no protection equals self-protection. I do not mean to say that the suffrage will at once cure every evil, but it will go a long way towards it, since equality in law, in education, in the labour-market must ultimately follow.'

'I quite see your position,' said Sir Henry, 'there can be no doubt that in the case of the labouring classes some of the strongest opponents to the extension of the franchise to working men are now to be found posing as their friends, because the labouring man has become a power in the country and can make his voice heard. But, on the whole, I think women are better off than *they* were.'

'As regards direct and legitimate influence I should say women are decidedly in a worse position, for any one of those working men might hope by industry and thrift to rise to a position which would entitle him to a vote, and as we were saying just now it is impossible to deny that the well-being of any class has always been in close connexion with its political power. "Government," according to Bentham, "never yet yielded a right unless bullied into it," and if it were made important to politicans to redress women's grievances, I do not doubt they would soon be doomed; but however susceptible Members may be to the voices of their constituents, they have no time, as a rule, to devote to the cause of those to whom

they are not directly responsible and who cannot record a vote either for or against them; it is only human nature that they should be ready and anxious to do all they can for those who have supported and will again support them; thus it has always happened that where those hitherto debarred from the franchise have ultimately obtained it, a decided change for the better in the legislation affecting them has soon occurred.'

'You say,' joined in Major Knagge, whose attention during the last few minutes had been divided between the grouse upon his plate and the points under discussion, 'you say women ought to have the vote as a means to redressing their grievances, but with all due respect to you and Lord Braybourne, I cannot for the life of me see that they've any grievances worth complaining of.'

'The subject of women's legal disabilities,' replied the Professor, 'would occupy us from now till midnight, and yet not be disposed of; if you care to remind me another time, however, we will discuss the question and I will point out to you some of them; I was just going to say that I look upon the granting of the suffrage to women as a measure of general utility quite as much as of class benefit, for there are not many thoughtful, liberal-minded people, I think, now-a-days, who refuse to grant that the admission of properly qualified voters is a strengthening, not a weakening of the Constitution, that the efficiency of a representative parliament is in direct ratio to the variety of interests and classes it represents. Some are asking, on the other hand, what educated, refining, elevating influence can be brought in to counterbalance that of the two millions or more of illiterate voters which the country franchise must add to the electoral roll; will not this difficulty be solved in a great measure by the admission of women?'

'There I quite agree with you,' said Mr. Silverton, 'I do not, as you know, approve of the extension of the franchise; I do not in the abstract like the principle of gradually widening the suffrage which seems to be the aim and object of many of our statesmen; directly the agricultural labourers are admitted

the inevitable result will be a considerable redistribution of seats, and one never knows where it will end; but the enfranchisement of women involves no such results, and I think we are strongest when basing their claim not upon any natural right, but precisely upon the principle you have just laid down, namely, that both women and the State would be the gainers.'

'I very much doubt that,' replied Major Knagge; 'if you come to inquire into the—er—class of women who form the majority of female ratepayers in London and—and—in other large towns, they are not of the sort from whom much good is to be gained.'

'You surely cannot be in earnest,' said Professor Wray, with some warmth, 'in hinting that the majority of women-householders are of questionable character; but even were this in some instances undeniable, we men, living as we do in such fragile houses, should shun stone-throwing as the most dangerous of pastimes; immediately you made morality a test of electoral right, I venture to say that men being what they are, the thousands in many of our largest constituencies would dwindle into units, while some candidates would be as hard put to it to find even ten righteous men in the city of their choice. No—whatever other superiority may be denied to women they certainly have the advantage of us here.'

'For my part,' said Mrs. Knagge presently, as, for obvious reasons, no one pressed at this moment the further discussion of her husband's suggestion, 'for my part, I think women ought to be satisfied, they have all they can reasonably require; the courtesy and consideration we receive are much more gratifying than any so-called rights; all the complaining in the world does no good, it only rouses men to jealousy and opposition.'

'Quite right, my dear,' said the Major, patronisingly, 'that is what I always say, if women want to seize on men's—er—prerogative, they must be prepared to give up their privileges.'

'Poor things!' said Madeline, 'are you not a little hard upon them? Your threat sounds very alarming, but still I think we may venture to hope that at any rate those men who

are already just and generous enough to support women's claims to wider interests, their desire for a power which will enable them to lighten the burden of their toiling, the temptations of their erring sisters, are not likely to entertain any jealousy or ill-feeling, and in spite of the terrible prospect raised by the suggestion that if women claim their rights they will lose their privileges, thoughtful women who have looked into these questions would, I think, have no hesitation in choosing the substance rather than the shadow, the benefit of the many rather than the indulgence of the few.'

'To quote a remark of Bright's,' said Professor Wray, 'when some one was waxing eloquent on the subject of benevolence—"Yes, yes, it is all very well, but one just law is worth a million of soup-kitchens." By flattery or deference to blind the eyes of individual women to evils which demand redress, and which only striking at the root of them will cure, is precisely the same principle which relieves individual want by indiscriminate charity, without attacking the causes of poverty. But I do not think there is any fear of women losing the respect and deference to which they are entitled, for I cannot think it would be a relief to any English gentleman to drop all chivalrous observance and manly courtesy; there is no more danger of this I am convinced than that women will ever lose the gentleness and grace which are natural to their sex. My experience is that some of the most chivalrous men of the present day are to be found amongst the staunch supporters of women's suffrage; certainly the tenderness and respect which are only given to women as a favour on condition of their remaining in a state of subjection, are an insult to reasonable women, the courtesy which affectionately presses your hand and at the same time treads heavily upon your foot, the selfishness which shelters itself behind a mask of consideration for others, like a certain noble householder I know of who, when burglars were heard below at night, said, "You go first, dearest, it is a mean man that would shoot a woman."'

'But,' said Miss Wynter, 'is it not to a woman's gentleness

and grace that men pay deference, qualities which many estimable persons think cannot possibly long survive their mingling in politics and in all the rougher affairs of life?'

'I think a grain of experience, Auntie,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'is worth a ton of conjecture in such matters; where women have obtained the suffrage as in the state of Wyoming, we have the testimony of Governor Hoyt himself as to its usefulness. Speaking at Philadelphia in reply to some very similar arguments to yours, he said he had never anywhere known women to be treated with so much real courtesy as in his own state, he had never seen even a hod-carrier in the streets of Cheyenne, or a man with a load upon his back who on passing a lady, did not lift or at least touch his hat. If politics have such a corrupting and hardening influence as you suggest then they must be quite as bad for men as for women.'

'I have more faith in nature, especially in the capabilities of a woman's nature,' said Professor Wray, 'than to think of their co-operation as other than subjectively, as well as objectively speaking, beneficial. I know there are short-sighted and nervous people who deny that the advancement of women to perfect equality means the intellectual elevation of the whole human race, on the grounds that with them intellectual development means physical degeneration, and that the most terrible results must ensue from women's taking part in the excitement of a political contest; but I wonder which is the more likely to strengthen and raise the whole nature, a healthy interest in the political, social, and intellectual questions of the day, or the enervating dissipations of a London season, the unhealthy conditions of a life of fashionable idleness.'

'When I hear men opposing the suffrage, too,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'because we are so "charming" and so on, that any change in us must be for the worse, I cannot help thinking of those reviewers who, in reply to Mrs. Beecher Stowe's appeal against slavery, said, "If the system can produce such black Christs as Uncle Tom, it would be a thousand pities to destroy so beneficial an institution"; if they saw fetters galling our

wrists I suppose they would refuse to remove them because the marks would be unsightly.'

'My dear lady, we have no intention of doing anything so—er—barbarous,' said Major Knagge; 'but we don't want to have the world turned upside down, that is all.'

'The best thing that could happen, I think,' replied Mrs. Silverton, 'to whatever has been the wrong side uppermost; really I do not think there is such very imminent danger that the distinctive attributes of womanhood will be destroyed by Act of Parliament.'

'Things have greatly changed, indeed, since my young days,' said Miss Wynter, with a gentle and somewhat despondent shake of the head; such a word as woman's rights was unknown in our vocabulary, and as for the suffrage!' and the old lady rounded off her sentence with a regretful little sigh.

'Quite a new craze, my dear madam,' said the Major pompously, 'and not the best development of the age——'

'I always notice,' said Madeline in an aside to Sir Henry, who was sitting next to her, 'that when the average Englishman says a thing is without precedent, he considers that the last word of destructive criticism has been uttered.'

'In short,' was the reply, 'he shies at a new idea; to quote Lord Sherbrooke, "like a horse at a perambulator." I am afraid your criticism is only too just, as a race, we are terribly conservative—but,' he added, turning to Major Knagge, who had just ceased speaking, 'the women suffrage advocates may claim the authority of ancient usage from the Gauls having called into their councils the chief women of the nation.'

'We may find a precedent much nearer home than that,' replied the Professor; 'it is a fact of which few seem to be aware, that in England women had anciently a right to vote for members of Parliament, a power which during the reign of three Henry's and Elizabeth they not only possessed but exercised, and though in Puritan times they were disfranchised by a text from St. Paul, on the restoration, legal judgment was given affirming the right of properly qualified women to

vote; a right, which, though it fell into abeyance, was never actually repealed until the Reform Bill of 1832, which restricted the franchise to "male persons"; so you see the idea of women's suffrage is after all no innovation.'

'Well, for my part,' said the Major, 'I have no desire to reform the Reform Bill on this point, and let the movement be as—er—widespread as it may in England and America, in no other country, so far as I know, is the question attracting any attention.'

'Miss Acton, you know more about this than I,' said the Professor, 'I believe it is the case, is it not, that the question of women's advancement is discussed with at least equal warmth in other countries.'

'In Austria, I believe, the right of voting has already been conceded to women,' was the reply. 'In Russia—I speak on the authority of a contributor to the *Contemporary Review**—since the reign of the Empress Elizabeth girls have been no more subjected to legal guardianship than boys, while the property of married women is held quite independently. If we are to judge from the large and increasing number of articles and works published upon women's questions, the interest excited by them is certainly not less on the Continent than with us. I cannot remember, of course, half those that I have seen. In France they have the *Droit des Femmes*, *La Gazette des Femmes*, in Italy *La Donna*, in Germany the *Deutscher Frauen Anwalt* the *Deutsche Hausfrauen Zeitung*, all dealing more or less with such social and political questions as we have been discussing. Besides these there are numerous pamphlets and larger works, published in these countries as well as in Norway and Sweden. In the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and more frequently still in the *Nouvelle Revue*, there have been from time to time, thoughtful and liberal papers on these questions, by Emile de Girardin and other writers of reputation, while, what I think speaks more strongly still, is the fact of Alexandre Dumas writing such a work as *Les*

* See *Contemporary Review*, December, 1878.

Femmes qui tuent et les Femmes qui Votent; for it is said that Dumas' success has been chiefly owing to his faculty for discerning, before any of his literary contemporaries, when any questions are coming to the front, in which direction the current of popular feeling is likely to turn, and managing to be just in advance of it.'

'If,' said Professor Wray, 'you compare the tone taken by the leading papers and magazines in this country and elsewhere, now, with the contemptuous ridicule of most of them in former days, when the *Standard* declared it to be impossible to treat such a theme as woman's suffrage with any seriousness, we cannot help seeing that a great advance has been made. It is no use to be impatient, for it takes two centuries to do away with an absurdity; one to recognise it, the other to cure it, those who look for anything like rapid action in the cumbrous machinery of State will certainly be disappointed. The proposal for women's suffrage will not pass into law probably this year or next, seeing that it took Parliament not far short of a century to adopt Adam Smith's theories of free trade, obviously sensible though they were. But it cannot be long, I think, before the emancipation of women is looked upon as the most urgent and necessary of reforms; people *will* know now-a-days the why and wherefore of everything, and customs, however old established, will have to live on their own merits, or die the death of the worn out and useless branch, which must be cut down to make room for the strong young shoots of progress.'

'There's a chiel amang us taking notes,' said Mrs. Silverton, presently, when the desert was on the table, and the servants had retired; 'it is no good to plead "not guilty," Madeline, I have noticed you all through dinner, making occasional entries in your note-book.'

'Some treason I am afraid; caricatures perhaps,' suggested Sir Henry, 'or caustic criticisms on the general imbecility of mankind, destined to appear in the pages of the *Women's Suffrage Journal*.'

'Your conception of the *motif* of that paper is not quite accurate,' replied Madeline, laughing; 'I was only amusing myself by noting side by side, the diametrically opposite arguments that one hears brought forward from time to time by persons of different views against giving women the franchise.'

'You seemed very much amused, I noticed,' said Sir Henry.

'Ye—es; there is always a sort of hidden absurdity, as well as a palpable one, I think, in want of logic. Even in so serious a case as that of the man who having murdered both parents claimed a lenient sentence on the plea that he was a poor orphan; one cannot help laughing at the absurdity of his argument, and it is just so with some of these, our opponents are so fond of reasoning in a circle, and shifting their ground from time to time, that I am constantly reminded of the old lady who said, "I am always open to conviction, but I should like to see the man who could convince me."'

'But obliquity of mental vision,' said Sir Henry, 'like its physical counterpart, is to be cured by judicious treatment, so if we have been illogical, have we not a right to ask that you will point out where?'

'I do not believe in your mental obliquity,' said Madeline, shaking her head, 'any more than in the defective sight of those children who divert themselves, and alarm their friends occasionally by assuming a squint, but you are quite welcome to see my notes, such as they are.'

'To be read aloud, Harry,' said his sister.

'By the writer's leave then. I find here under the heading "Arguments I have heard against granting the suffrage to women:"'—

'A member of the Peace Society says, "They are too pugnacious to be trusted with political power, they would rush into war on the smallest provocation."'

'"No," says the advocate of a spirited foreign policy, "I refuse women political influence because they would infallibly belong to the peace-at-any-price party, regardless of their country's honour."'

'"Women are too indifferent to politics," says one.'

'One Liberal opponent fears "Women would all be Conservatives."'

'One chivalrous man says, "Women are too silly and ignorant to have a vote."'

'They are so wanting in force of character, as well as force of muscle, urges one, "That their votes would only double those of their fathers or brothers, or whatever man for the moment had an influence over them."'

'Some, like Mr. Newdigate, fear "Women would be governed by the clergy."'

'One says that "Women's minds are so unlike men's, that they are totally unfitted by nature to have any part in the same work."'

'On one side we hear "Women don't want the suffrage, and so there is no necessity for them to have it."'

'"Women are so eager and excitable," says another, "that to give them a vote would be to introduce discord into families."'

'A Conservative, on the other hand, points to the French Revolution, and says it is not safe to give women votes for they always rush into extremes.'

'Another declares that they are "so sweet and angelic that any change in them must be for the worse."'

'"I oppose the movement on quite different grounds," says another, "women are so powerful, that it would never do to give them a vote unless we wish them to usurp all men's functions and privileges."'

'Others say that "Women who agitate for reform are so advanced, that they would be for abolishing religion, to say nothing of our most cherished social institutions."'

'While another holds that "The feelings and ideas of men and women are so much alike, that men are equally, indeed rather better qualified to interpret the wishes and opinions of women, than the said women are themselves."'

'On the other, we are told, "If women would only wait quietly instead of clamouring as they do, they would have much more chance of getting what they want."'

'Well done, Madeline,' said Mrs. Silverton, 'I hope you feel properly subdued, Harry.'

'Quite crushed,' was the reply. 'I should think,' he added, turning to Madeline, 'you have shown up every possible argument that ever has been, or could be, brought against the suffrage.'

'Not quite; there are a few others equally ridiculous; one of the most amusing I came upon in an old black-letter volume in the British Museum entitled, the *Lawes and Resolutions of Women's Rights*, the author of which says, "The reason why women have no control in Parliament, why they make no laws, consent to none, abrogate none, is owing to original sin!"'

'Your old friend—or enemy—evidently was not of Pope's opinion, at anyrate, that women have nothing original about them,' said Sir Henry.

'Miss Acton has made out a very clear case, you cannot deny that,' said the Professor, with his rare smile; 'such arguments as those, which, ridiculous as they are, have actually been applauded in the House of Commons, remind me of a story I have heard of a monk who, discussing with Erasmus, the heresies of Luther and his followers, was glorying in the fact that the Church had completely answered them. "I have been told," said Erasmus, "that you burnt their books; but I never heard that you had answered them." It is more than ignorance and prejudice can do to extinguish truth.'

'I must protest,' began Major Knagge, but in the few minutes it had taken him to prepare his reply, Mrs. Silverton had risen from the table, and his words were now lost in the rustling of the ladies' dresses and the general moving of chairs.

Something in Sir Henry's manner, as he handed back Madeline's note-book, made her, on reaching the drawing-room, take another look at the contents and there, in another handwriting beneath her own words, she read:—'The owner of this note-book may, if she pleases, find some analogy between its condition and that of the latest and humblest of her disciples;

on both has she inscribed some new ideas, in both is there a page apparently untouched, though in the case of the one as in that of the other, invisible ink may have traced upon it characters more indelible than the rest, which it requires only a little warmth to bring to light.'

'Madeline, come and play this duet with me; auntie has a love of Beethoven which does her credit, and I am sure she deserves a reward for the patience with which she listens to our tiresome discussions and heterodox views.'

Madeline hastily put the note-book in her pocket, and went at once to the piano, in answer to her friend's request, and since her love of music equalled her capacity, once there, she was in no hurry to leave it again; and, either absorbed in studying the words of some German songs she was turning over, or for some other reason, when the gentlemen entered the room she did not appear to notice the fact, and it was with a pre-occupied air that she received the cup of tea that Sir Henry presently brought her. After eliciting only monosyllabic replies to one or two commonplace remarks, he said in his usual straightforward manner—'I hope I did not offend you by my presumption in venturing to scribble in your note-book.'

'Oh no,' she answered with an action curiously resembling that of a dog who has been plunged into the water against its will, and is glad to shake off the effects of his immersion; 'not at all, why should I be offended? But I am no Œdipus,' she added, 'and cannot be expected to solve enigmas.'

'Yet you are the most ardent exponent of the wants and wishes of your own sex that I have ever met, and I should have said women are the most perplexing enigmas in creation. Have you been singing that song of Mendelssohn's?'

'No; I was only thinking what a remarkably free translation "Hopes and Fears" is of the title *Neue Liebe*.'

'It is; but perhaps there was a subtle though natural connexion in the translator's mind between *Neue Liebe* and "Hopes and Fears"—the one undoubtedly involves the other;

but do you not think, though looking at human qualities in the abstract, that the plant "which grasps the soil yet seeks the sun;" in other words, the spirit of hopefulness is to be encouraged?' the words were uttered lightly, but there was a shade of anxiety in the speaker's tone.

'Under some circumstances,' she replied, 'though the Italians have a proverb which says that, "The man who lives on hope will die of hunger."—But you will join us in this quartette, will you not,' she added, going to fetch a piece of music from the other end of the grand piano, 'we only waited for your arrival, Nellie?' And Madeline held up the sheet in question, whereupon Mrs. Silverton and her husband joined them, thus rendering any further *tête-à-tête* impracticable.

CHAPTER XII.

'Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us,
The laws corrupted to their ends that made them.'

T. Otway, *Venice Preserved.*

'Even in those countries where they are best treated, the laws are generally unfavourable to women with respect to almost all the points in which they are most deeply interested.' Lord Macaulay.

'I have arrived at conclusions which I keep to myself as yet, and only utter as Greek *φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσι*, the principle of which is, that there will never be a good world for women until the last monk and therewith the last remnant of the monastic idea of and legislation for women, *i.e.*, the Canon Law, is civilized off the face of the earth. Meanwhile all the most pure and high minded women in England and in Europe have been brought up under the shadow of the Canon Law, and have accepted it with their usual divine self-sacrifice as their destiny by law of God and nature, and consider their own womanhood outraged, when it, their tyrant, is meddled with.'—Kingsley's *Life and Letters. Vol. II., p.* 328. *Letter to John Stuart Mill. June* 17, 1849.

'Man to man so oft unjust
Is always so to woman.' Byron.

'In all times, and in all countries, laws have ever been more or less oppressive for women because they have been dictated, promulgated, and sanctioned by men.' Voltaire.

'Aussi longtemps que la loi Française maintiendra entre l'homme et la femme des inégalités que la nature ne justifie pas, les femmes seront fondées à revendiquer le droit de concourir à la réforme de lois iniques, de lois qui les abaissent, de lois qui les blessent, de lois qui avaient une raison d'être aux temps et dans les pays barbares, de lois qui n'ont plus de raison de subsister aux temps et dans les pays civilisés, de lois enfin qui sont un anachronisme.'

Emile de Girardin, *La Nouvelle Revue, Oct.* 15, 1880.

'So far as I am able to form an opinion of the general tone and colour of our law in these matters, where the peculiar relation of men and women is concerned, that law does less than justice to women, and great mischief, misery, and scandal, result from that state of things in many of the occurrences and events of life. . . . . If it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object, and who shall see his purpose carried onward to its consequences in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women, will, in my opinion, be a real benefactor to his country.'

W. E. Gladstone. *Speech in the House of Commons, May* 3, 1871.

CHAPTER XII.

LEGAL DISABILITIES.

'WERE you really serious last night in asserting that there was no injustice to women, no want of due consideration for their interests to be found in our laws?' asked Professor Wray, as the next morning after breakfast he and Major Knagge strolled together up and down the long verandah with their cigars, in hopes that the rain which was now coming down in torrents, might sooner or later take its departure. 'I cannot believe you were in earnest.'

'Never more so, my dear sir; I don't deny that there may have been some little injustice occasionally in the past, but since this—er—new Married Women's Property Act, it seems to me that they are going to have things all their own way, why it is the most magnificently generous piece of legislation that the world has ever seen.'

'I should call it no more than an act of tardy justice; it has given women nothing, it has merely enabled them to hold their own; and though it is historically true that everywhere the rights of property have been recognised before the rights of persons, and where the property of any individual or class is secured other rights are almost sure to follow, yet this is no reason for forgetting that there are yet many evil and injurious laws unrepealed; while in regard to those which have ceased to exist we have still their history, proving as conclusively as their existence could, the fact I maintained yesterday, that any class politically ignored is never safe from injustice. Women owe ecclesiastical laws a very serious grudge, for it was the Canon Law which corrupted the Common Law of England and retarded civilisation by its destruction of the property and other rights of women. The worst features of the Common

Law, as Blackstone admits, are those touching upon the rights of women; the unbounded influence gained by the Church in the Middle Ages over the State, has, in short, endured to this day in our Criminal Code. It is only the work done within the last half century by able women and their friends which has called attention to these abuses, and obtained the repeal of some. The position of wives with regard to their property has at last been forced on the attention of Parliament, and not too soon; for, year by year, I have observed that many of the best and most thoughtful women have shown a growing indifference to, not to say dread of, a condition which—to quote the words of Blackstone—"placed them in every way at a disadvantage," and with delightful inconsistency made the most solemnly responsible action of a woman's life a reason for declaring her irresponsible; with similar logic and sense of justice, the law which made a man in church endow his bride with all his worldly goods really took from her everything she possessed, and in return the husband was only bound to keep her off the rates. 'You think I am exaggerating,' he continued in reply to his companion's incredulous look; 'but listen to the words of Coke, "Marriage is an absolute gift by the wife of all her chattels personal, whether the wife survive the husband or not"; the distinct contract in the marriage service was not only legally null and void, it was actually reversed, so much so that the words of the old Russian nuptial consecration, "Here wolf take thy lamb," would not have been inappropriate in this country, for according to our law there is no doubt that before this new Act came into operation all a woman's interests were in marriage summarily devoured; she had no more power than an infant of contracting in her separate capacity, and none of sueing in a court of law for the enforcement of her rights; if a wife, who through no fault of her own, was living apart from her husband, met with a disabling railway accident, *he* might legally take every penny of the money received by her in compensation. * I know a case myself in which the wife was

* See *Irish Law Times*, May 17, 1879.

earning an independent living; being unfortunate enough to meet with a serious railway accident in which her leg was broken, she obtained from the railway company one hundred pounds damages, but this the Court was obliged by law to pay, not to her, but to her husband, who was a thorough-paced scoundrel, and who did not scruple to apply the whole of the money to his own use; the poor woman was in the greatest straits, having a heavy doctor's bill to pay, and her business having, during her long illness, almost entirely fallen away; but the law had nothing to do with this, the injured limb was her husband's property, and not one single penny of that hundred pounds could she claim. More than this, it is a fact, though not, I believe, generally known, that when a woman had only accepted an offer of marriage, all she had, or expected to have, became virtually her intended husband's, and no gift or deed executed by her between the period of acceptance and the marriage was held to be legally valid, "for," says Roper, in his *Law of Husband and Wife*, "were she permitted to give away or otherwise settle her property, he might be disappointed in the wealth he looked to in making the offer."' *

'But his wife's fortune,' said Major Knagge, 'may have been—er—a weighty consideration with him in undertaking the responsibilities of marriage, and to disappoint him of what he had been led to expect would constitute, I should say,—er —a species of fraud.'

'The fraud is certainly not less in a case where a man has set aside a woman's disposition of property about which before marriage he knew nothing; but in this case the law supported the evil-doer, and who could dare to blame him? It was quite just that a man should be the administrator of what was not his own, and which he was perhaps not in the least capable of managing; there was nothing out of the way in the fact that he might transfer any Government Stock or shares from her name to his, might appropriate the balance at her bankers,

* Roper *On Husband and Wife*, i. 163.

claim the money for debts due to her, and invest it foolishly without her consent, gamble it away, or spend it upon other women, the law could not touch him. He might even, if it so pleased him, sell or give away her personal effects, her clothes, or jewellery, and though every penny they possessed may have been hers, yet if he died intestate, she could only legally claim one third, whilst if he chose, he could even will it all away from her.'

'But no man would ever do such a thing.'

'It has been done over and over again. An officer to whom I was talking some years ago on the injustice of the laws relating to the property of married women, told me a sad instance in the case of an old servant he knew, who having been for years a lady's-maid and housekeeper, had saved some money, which, with presents and legacies, amounted to a large property for a person in her station. Poor thing! she married unwisely, and her husband, when he died, left everything by will, to his sister; not a farthing of her own money, put by as a provision for old age, did the widow receive; even her silver spoons—a present from her late mistress—went to the sister-in-law, and the poor wife had no alternative between starving or going into a workhouse, until the sister, under the influence and expostulations of the clergyman of the parish, was forced, in deference to public opinion, to allow her a few shillings a-week out of what was really her own money. Here is another case which I can vouch for as equally true. A lady, possessed of considerable property, and no less faith in the man of her choice, married without a settlement; soon her husband behaved so atrociously that she was compelled to leave him; all she could legally claim to live on being a pittance of about four shillings a-week. Up to the year 1870, as I daresay you know, even a woman's earnings were not her own, and numberless were the cases in which the money of a poor woman, earned with difficulty for the support of herself and her children, was repeatedly taken away by the husband and spent in drink; if she placed it in the charge of a friend or banker this was of

no use, for they were bound to give it up at the demand of the husband. If husband and wife were living apart, and she could just contrive to support herself, he might make periodical raids upon her, sweep off everything she possessed, and if it pleased him further to sell her business, the law would bear him out. A sad story in illustration of this was told me a short time since by a lady who knew the people concerned. The husband of a poor girl, an irreproachable and loving wife, took to drinking, until his whole nature, not originally a bad one, became changed; soon he neglected his wife and his business, and spent everything he earned in drink; but for a time she struggled bravely on. At last, however, shortly before the birth of her second child, her husband took away and pawned all the clothing and necessaries she had provided, sold her bed even, and drove her into the streets to seek help from charity in her hour of utmost need. For her children's sake she struggled back to life and to something like hope again; finding a situation in which she was fortunate enough to be allowed to keep her children with her, she went to service; but the husband pursued her from place to place, annoying her employers, collecting her earnings by process of law, and taking any clothes belonging to her or the children upon which he could lay his hands. Such was the iniquity sanctioned by the "chivalry" and "consideration for women" displayed in our common law until quite recently. Indeed, one might go on indefinitely multiplying instances, and that not only in one class of life. You remember the case of the Hon. Mrs. Norton?'

'I can't say I know much about it,' replied the Major. 'There was some question of her fidelity, wasn't there? and Lord—er—let me see, who was it?—Lord Melbourne's name was brought in somehow.'

'Some such charge, though everywhere allowed now to have been false, was, I believe, made the plea for separation; but what I referred to was the fact of her husband's being able legally to claim the copyrights of her works, and to take the 1000*l.* per annum which they brought in, allowing her out of

it at first about 400*l.* a-year, but afterwards pocketing the whole. Another even worse case, perhaps,—for Mrs. Norton had many friends—was that of a poor woman at Liverpool, whose first husband died, leaving her a thousand pounds in the bank, and a comfortable inn, the business of which she carried on. Not very long after she married again, and soon the second husband drew her thousand pounds from the bank and decamped with it to Australia. She continued to support herself and her daughter, however, by the business; but, after a few years, the husband returned in a wretched plight, professed repentance, and was received again. One day this reformed character considerately advised his wife to go with her daughter for a drive in the country; he thought "it would do her good." Unsuspicious of evil, and indeed grateful for his thoughtfulness, they complied; but, on their return home, some hours later, they found the man in their absence had sold the business to a stranger and again disappeared. They had no redress, the property and earnings were legally the husband's, and the two women were turned adrift, homeless and penniless upon the streets of Liverpool.'

'But I am sure there was some law that, when the husband was absent two years, allowed the woman to get an order from a magistrate to protect her earnings.'

'No doubt; and the man might stay and live in idleness upon her, or come back at intervals of a few months and clear off everything she possessed.'

'But all these are extreme cases, not one man in—in—I should say, a thousand, would behave in that way.'

'Is this any excuse for the existence of laws which rendered such a state of things possible, which, instead of supporting the physically weaker, made life all the harder for them? Laws are not for the upright and honest members of the community, but as a terror to evil-doers; and by not guarding against the possibility of offences being committed with impunity, the law is to a great extent answerable for them. If all men were just and good, all husbands and wives were true and loving; if such

things as conflicting interests were never known between them, these laws might have done little or no harm, for such people are a law unto themselves. The fact is, the theory of a wife's subjection, upon which all such unequal laws are based, instead of restraining the unscrupulous, really puts an instrument of cruelty into their hands, so much so, that in classes where brutal instincts are not curbed by education and refined surroundings, their tendency was, and in some instances, is still, to make women, who earn their own living, prefer unlegalised contracts. A man some years since was tried for cruelly assaulting the woman who lived with him. "What have you to say in defence?" he was asked. "I was in liquor, your worship; I gave her money to go to market, and told her to look sharp, but she was gone more'n an hour." "Had she died," said the magistrate, "you would have been tried for murder. You must remember she is not your slave, not accountable to you for every moment of her time—she is not—in fact she is not"—a moment's pause, during which a suppressed titter ran through the court—"your wife," the worthy magistrate would have said, had not shame stopped his mouth; but the lesson unintentionally taught was only too evident, namely, that the illegality of their relationship was in the woman's favour. A lady who has done much in alleviating the condition of the poor of her own sex, on one occasion begged a working woman at Wigan to marry the man she lived with; her reply was, "My Tom brings me some of his wages now, but maybe if I married him, he would do like the rest." Our laws in regard to husband and wife, as I said before, have done in the past, and do still in many instances, much to directly encourage illegal contracts. The mistress has legal rights and protection which the wife has not; her money has always been her own, and, unlike the wife, she may always claim her children, while she is free to leave him for unkindness, without being obliged to prove cruelty or adultery. Not long ago a husband got four months' imprisonment for brutally ill-using his wife just after her confinement, while another man who,

when drunk, quarrelled with a woman not his legal wife, though *she* was partly to blame, had *six* months' imprisonment for assault. He had not the excuse, you see, of the former; he could not say, like Petruchio,—

> "She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,
> My household stuff."

For my part, I do not wonder at the exclamation of the sister of Kossuth—

"No countrywoman of mine would ever put up with the legal position assigned to married women in England."'

'All those cases you mention sound very unfair, of course,' said Major Knagge; 'but they might all have been obviated by settlements.'

'A curious idea of justice this artificial system which enabled the wealthier classes, only by an evasion, to give the common law the go by, and avoid for their daughters the legal penalties of marriage, which to the poor, until recently, meant that their savings and earnings, all their scanty means in the present and provision for the future, were to be confiscated without appeal. Of course, with or without those complicated arrangements concerning trusts, and all the rest of it, by which the severity of the old common law was mitigated, the happily married knew nothing of the legal position of a wife; it was upon the helpless and the miserable—the very ones whom legislation should protect—that these iniquitous property laws pressed.'

'Come, come,' said the Major, 'you must allow that these laws cut both ways; a wife, to wit, under them could run up as many debts as she pleased without being—er—responsible; the husband had to find the money.'

'Two wrongs do not make a right, because by one bad law an unprincipled woman would be the gainer; this is no excuse for perpetuating others from which the innocent suffer. But this subject reminds me of an amusing notice which appeared a few years ago in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. A husband

had advertised in the usual way that he, Thomas A., would no longer be responsible for the debts incurred by his wife, whereupon the wife advertised in reply, "This is to notify that I, Elizabeth A., am able to pay all my own debts now that I have got quit of Tommy." But seriously, the effect of the law cutting, as you say, both ways, was that it allowed the most unprincipled of either sex impunity in evil doing. That there have been many happy unions in spite of our iniquitous marriage laws is due to the fact that in these instances the principle of equality has been practically acknowledged, because culture and progress have taken us far ahead of laws only fit for barbarous times, and individual men feeling this, have, in their sense of justice, ignored them, and made them to all intents and purposes a dead letter.'

'But I don't agree with you,' said the Major, 'in thinking that this new Act giving absolute control over their own property to married women is an—an—an unmitigated blessing; I should say it is likely to have very bad results from creating separate interests.'

'I cannot believe,' replied Professor Wray, 'that the happiness of English domestic life depends on the wife's absolute dependence on the husband, nor on the subordination of her will; harmony between two natures is not to be produced by silencing one of them. I quite agree with Herbert Spencer (*Social Statics*) in thinking that "even as we loathe now the custom prevailing among certain nations forbidding women to eat in company with men, so shall we come in time to loathe the so-called civilised theories of the wife's subjection to the husband"; it is demoralising to both, making the man, unless of exceptionally strong mind and generous nature, inclined to think himself of chief importance, not only in the State but in all other matters, and fostering in the women weakness, cowardice, and often a want of straightforwardness.'

'Well,' said Major Knagge, 'all I can say is, I shall be curious to see what women make of this new-found liberty when they have had it, say,—er—a dozen years or so. I

think it is most probable that their having unlimited control over their own property means that they will fritter it away in dress and jewellery, or waste it upon some unworthy object.'

'Men never waste any money, do they, upon expensive dinners, wines, the turf, fast living, or any other form of self-indulgence? Truly, we, as a sex, are well qualified to talk of women's extravagance. And though, no doubt, there are thoughtless, expensive wives, I do not think any man who treats the woman he has married as a child—never telling her what his income is, or what their expenditure ought to be, has any right to complain; nor can I see that the thoughtlessness of some, who, never having been taught to earn money, do not know the value of it, is any reason for controlling the property of the whole sex. By this rule, not a man among us could hold his own purse-strings.'

'I don't think the cases are parallel; look what foolish investments women make when they do get control of any money.'

'I am fortunate enough to know some women who are both admirable managers and judicious investors; and there will be more as time goes on, for where women are unbusinesslike, it is chiefly owing, I suspect, to want of training and practice, rather than to any inherent lack of the necessary faculties; it is hardly fair that any one should be kept from acquiring a knowledge of business matters, and then be accused of incapacity. We shall see in this, as in all similar cases, responsibility will develop power, and women will learn to manage their own affairs ably and wisely, without relying, as in the past, upon the help of some man, be he father, or husband, or brother, or scheming man of business.'

'That's as it may be,' said the Major; 'but when you talk about equality, there's no such thing as—er—absolute equality; somebody must rule, and that somebody—why it stands to reason—*must* be the husband; he provides the money and keeps the household going.'

'So you would give him the wife's property and earnings, and then make that a plea for his absolute sovereignty.'

'But isn't the man in nine cases out of ten the bread-winner?'

'I should say that except in a few privileged instances, wives work quite as hard as their husbands; do quite their share in the support of the house. The marriage state is one of mutual dependence, *he* has one set of duties to attend to, *she* has another. *He* could no more keep up the same comforts or luxuries of home without her, than *she* could do without him. Amongst the wealthier classes the wife probably brings her contribution of property towards their common expenses, and if not, it must not be forgotten that women have had to forfeit in favour of men the right to exercise, in most cases, their faculties, except at home. Amongst the poorer classes, take for example the case of an artisan or labouring man; supposing he had to attend to the washing, the cooking, the making, the mending which fill up her days from early morning till late at night; would he be able, think you, to earn even the half of his wages? Then, surely, since she saves at least as much as he gains, she has equal right to be considered the bread-winner.'

'Well, after all,' said the Major, 'we are going over old ground. This property-business is settled once and for all, I suppose, and nothing you can say in favour of the new law, or I can say against it, will make much difference; and then this plea for giving them the franchise falls through; for I am sure they have nothing else to complain of in the laws. I should say a married woman's—er—position is about as good as it could be.'

'If men,' said Professor Wray very seriously, 'habitually exercised over their wives the full legal power they possess, I do not think you, or any one else, could for a moment think there was nothing left to be desired; though one despotic power formerly given to the husband has become null and void, there is still injustice enough, and to spare, of which every wife and mother in England has a right to complain, since the children she has borne, still belong by law solely to the father; a mother

has during his lifetime no legal right to exercise any control whatever over their education and training after the age of seven. If the husband chooses to remove a child altogether from the mother's charge he may do so; he may have their children brought up as Mormons or Mahommedans, or in whatever creed he pleases, in defiance of her wishes and convictions. If he changes his religion after marriage he can insist upon all their children being brought up in his newly adopted faith; the wife has no power to protest. Indeed, even when, as in the Agar-Ellis case there was an express written agreement, without which the marriage would not have taken place, that any children should be brought up in the mother's faith, the husband and father may break through this with impunity; *his* rights are so sacred that he cannot sign them away. As for the mother's rights, legally she has none, and many a good woman, when there has been a separation, secures the possession of her children only by making a money-compensation to the father. The lesson of the Agar-Ellis case is this, that though a man enters into a solemn engagement that he will do this, or that, if some woman will accept him as her husband; if he chooses, having gained the ends for which the contract was made, he may repudiate the same, and the law will uphold him. Can any one, with an unperverted moral sense, help feeling indignant at such so-called justice? The exponents of the law have no other excuse than, with Baron Bramwell to declare, "that a mother's rights over her children are legally *nil*." Is it not time that women should make their voices heard by the legislature, when though told by many that motherhood is their only true vocation, their children may yet at the will of the father be legally taken away from their guardianship, and given to the care of a stranger, or even sent out of the country if he pleases? And not only may he dispose of their offspring, as he sees fit during his lifetime; but also by will, since the law does not recognise the mother's right of guardianship as paramount. The father may consign them to the care of whomsoever he pleases to her exclusion; and even though he may have the right feeling to

leave them to her guardianship, she has no power to appoint a successor.'

'Impossible,' said Major Knagge.

'Unfortunately, I have studied the law too carefully upon this subject to be mistaken. It cannot be too much emphasised that as the law stands at present, *a mother has no control whatever over her own children;* no voice in their education; no legal power to claim their society; she may see them consigned, on their father's death, to the care of strangers; whereas if, on the other hand, she dies, she has no power by will to provide for their welfare and happiness supposing he should marry again and unwisely.'

'I haven't the particulars at my fingers ends, of course,' said the Major, 'but my—er—impression is that the law provides a remedy in case it is bad for the children to leave their mother.'

'True, if she have means, she may by a very costly process, enlist the aid of the Court of Chancery, and by this means obtain control of the children, if she can prove her husband's conduct to have been so bad as to entitle her to a separation, and that the children would suffer serious moral or physical injury through being left with him, but not otherwise. Again, it is a punishable offence for a minor to marry without the consent of a father, but if there be a father a mother's consent is unnecessary.'

'All this, of course, appears hard enough; but there is quite as much to be said on the other side, on the—er—score of inequality, so long as it is the father and not the mother who is bound to maintain their children.'

'If he fail to support them she is responsible for their maintenance, and can only compel him to contribute by proving herself and them paupers. We must not forget, also that by the provisions of the Married Women's Property Act (1883) the mother, who has means, is bound equally with the father to contribute towards their support.* And, after all, when it comes to a question of conflicting rights, what has the best father to

* See Section 21, Married Women's Property Act, 1883.

offer as an equivalent in kind for the sufferings of every mother, for her daily and hourly tendence of her children during their early years, that should give him the sole legal control and custody. Is it not shameful to think of, that, however bad a man may be, though living a flagrantly immoral life, he may take their children from a virtuous mother, while she is powerless to remove them from his influence, except through a divorce or separation, which are only to be obtained by a tedious and expensive process. It is not in the power of any Court, as, of course, you know, to grant a divorce, unless not only has the husband's unfaithfulness been proved without question, but his cruelty have reached a point at which it becomes illegal. Many a case has come to my knowledge in which a mother has chosen to endure both moral torture and physical ill-usage rather than leave her husband, because it will entail parting from their children also. The American law is on this point almost identical with our own, and Mrs. Gage, the wife of a lawyer in the United States, relates that what first impressed her with the grievous injustice of their law as regards women, was the case of an unfortunate wife who came to Mr. Gage, asking what was to be done to protect herself from the violence of her husband who, not content with living in idleness upon the property left her by her father, cruelly ill-treated both her and her children. "Leave him," said Mr. Gage. "But he will not let me have my children." "No; in law they belong only to him." "The property is mine." "In the law not a cent of it, except a bare maintenance." "My father gave it all to me." "But the law gives it all to your husband." "Can I sue him for beating me?" "Not in your own name; however, if you choose to leave him, I will do what I can for you. Can you leave your children?" "My God! No! The youngest is a baby!" "Then I am afraid I cannot help you, unless you sue for assault and battery and bind him over to keep the peace." "If I were to do that he would kill me." And the poor woman rose slowly from her chair, and in voice that went to our souls said simply, as she went out, "I must go to my children."'

'What an abominable state of things,' said Sir Henry, who had just joined them, having been driven back by the persistent downpour from the constitutional on which he and Neptune started half-an-hour before. 'But you said just now something about *illegal* cruelty on the part of a husband. I supposed that anything in the form of personal violence towards a woman would be held in these days, a punishable offence.'

'Towards a *woman*, yes; provided she is not a wife! That is just the difference; for the old common law considered it quite reasonable to make a husband answerable for a wife's misbehaviour, and to this intent entrusted him with supreme authority, including the power of restraining her, if necessary, by domestic chastisement. For some misdemeanours, the civil law, at one time, allowed him to beat her severely with whips and cudgels. As civilisation advanced, however, this power was somewhat curtailed, and the husband, though allowed still to chastise his wife, was forbidden to use a stick any bigger than his thumb, and Englishmen still possess the privilege, viz., the right of every male inhabitant to beat his wife, which, so says the old chronicler, when granted by King Humbert IV. of Savoy, to the town of Villafranca "attracted thither many residents." Is it any wonder that human brutes behave, as they do, when such laws still disgrace our statute books.'

'None,' said Sir Henry, 'it is perfectly shocking to think that the acts of violence against wives which one sees reported day after day in the papers, find in our laws themselves some sort of authority, and I have no doubt there are thousands of cases one never hears of.'

'Yes, indeed; so common amongst the lower classes is this personal violence, that one poor woman I know of exclaimed in gratitude for her exceptional good fortune, "Why my man is more like a friend than a husband; in all the years we have been married, he've never so much as struck me once."'

'And yet, I suppose,' replied Sir Henry, 'things are in some respects better than they were, as a people we are getting gradually more humanised.'

'If this be so, it is education; the developement and spread of refinement and good feeling, not the law that we have to thank for it, since a husband may still legally employ any act of coercion he sees fit short of endangering his wife's life or health, while the denial of the franchise, the inequalities of the law, have made low-natured man, seeing women possessed of inferior rights, conceive a mean opinion of their understanding, and look upon offences against them as of comparatively little importance. At the same time, it is very rarely that a man, however ruffianly, kicks or beats his sister as he does his wife, and why? Simply because she is not in his power and would not endure it. A single woman is comparatively free; but a wife's person is still the absolute property of her husband even against her consent.* Up to the present century—since a wife was incapable of giving evidence against her husband—she might be savagely ill-treated almost with impunity, provided a third person was not present. And though, now-a-days, a wife's evidence is received in these cases still, on an average, there are daily in England four brutal assaults by husbands on wives; and I honestly believe it is the state of the law which is in a great measure answerable for this in allowing poor ignorant brutes to regard their wives as beings whose legal rights are not assured, and who, up to a certain point, may be trampled upon with impunity.'

'The best thing women can do then is to get a separation,' said Major Knagge, 'no magistrate would refuse it when there is any—any—any—er—sufficient ground.'

'That is not my impression, and I have read the police-reports upon this subject for a very long time. Not long ago a woman applied at the Clerkenwell Police Court for a Protection Order. Three days after marriage her husband had beaten her severely; the home was hers, and he had broken up, in passion, nearly all her things, and threatened her so, that she went in fear of her life. She had been obliged to leave him at last, and now begged for protection and a separate allowance.

* See Mill's *Subjection of Women.* Chapter II.

And what was the magistrate's answer? "You seem to have made a bad bargain; but under the circumstances I do not see my way to doing anything for you." There are numerous similar instances where an ill-used woman has applied in vain for a Separation Order, in such a case the authorities ought to be forced, I consider, to grant her the release she craves, instead of telling her as they do so frequently, to give her brutal husband "another trial," the consequence of which, too often is, that finding the law so lenient towards his savage instincts, he again indulges in his favourite pastime of beating and kicking the wife given back into his power, until Heaven, more kind than man, gives her the release which she had months before entreated for in vain.'

'I believe,' said Sir Henry, 'the inadequacy of the punishments inflicted by some magistrates for assaults upon wives has quite as much to do with their frequency as the inequalities of the law; indeed I have heard of a French jury who said as an excuse for recommending a murderer to mercy, that "it was only his wife." This may or may not be true, but it is impossible to help being struck by the frequent verdicts of "manslaughter," and the lenient sentences often inflicted upon men guilty of murdering their wives.'

'Very true,' replied the Professor. 'I remember not long ago (June 1883) being struck by an example of this. William Hill, a blacksmith at Manchester, came home drunk one night and asked his wife for money to get more beer; upon her refusal he knocked her down, kicking her brutally. As soon as she got up he seized her arm, placed it across the table and deliberately broke it, and afterwards greatly aggravated the injury by preventing her from going to a doctor; his punishment was six months imprisonment, while a woman, Ellen Ryder, who a week or two after was convicted of assaulting and wounding her husband, got twelve months with hard labour.'

'No doubt,' said Sir Henry, 'a violent wife deserves punishment; but seeing that a man is the one best able to defend himself, I fail to understand why her punishment should be

more than doubled, except upon the hypothesis that some such spirit as that animating the French jury pervades our own courts of justice.'

'To give you another instance,' said Professor Wray, 'of inequality, not only in our laws themselves, but in the administration of them; some time since my attention was called to two cases tried before Mr. Justice Lopes, one was concerned with a painful matter not often discussed in detail; a chemist had been found guilty of "murder" through having accidentially caused the death of a poor woman by endeavouring to save her from the exposure of an ordinary confinement. No doubt he was much to blaim and deserved punishment; but whether it is wise of the law to make it wilful murder in such a case when death ensues, is, I think, open to question. However the chemist was condemned to death, a sentence which contrasts strangely with that inflicted in the other case, reported at the same time, where a man in a fit of drunken rage literally kicked his wife to death; for this "rash act," as it was called, he was only sent to prison with hard labour for fifteen months. As the *Daily News* said, in commenting upon these cases, the judge, even when a jury brings in a verdict of manslaughter, has power to pass any sentence short of a capital one, and the infliction of such an inadequate penalty must give a deplorable stimulus to two very dangerous notions which among a certain class are already only too prevalent, first, that crimes of violence are much more venial than crimes of dishonesty; secondly, that wives are a superior kind of property who may be ill-treated with comparative impunity.

'That last fellow richly deserved at least penal servitude for life,' exclaimed Sir Henry; 'while, as for the chemist, however much from a moral point of view he may have been to blame, the law, I agree with you in thinking, ought in such a case to inflict something short of hanging.'

'Decidedly; compare this sentence with that passed on a man named Bradley, of Preston, who, in 1872, held his wife over the fire till she was so severely burnt as to die in con-

sequence. If ever a brute deserved flogging first and hanging afterwards, he did; but what was his punishment, only ten years penal servitude, the same as another man has got for stealing a purse containing a few shillings.' *

'When I read some time ago,' said Sir Henry, 'of a man in New Jersey, who killed his wife by throwing her out of window, and was in consequence accused of "murder in the second degree," I could not help wondering, with others, what constituted murdered in the first degree.'

'I must say,' replied Professor Wray, 'that it seems, sometimes, as if the feelings, not only of lawyers and jurymen, but of the judges themselves, are blunted by the frequency of such sad cases as we have been referring to, and by the influence of our laws of servitude in marriage. It is not many years ago since an English judge ruled that it belonged to the husband's conjugal rights to keep possession of his wife's person even against her will; and that, therefore, though he struck or otherwise ill-treated her; though she might have learnt to loathe his very presence, yet if she attempted to run away he might claim her from sheltering friends, bring her back again and again, and lock her up if he thought fit. For though growing refinement of manners has tempered legal despotism, in point of fact a woman, when she marries, forfeits all right to the control of her own person, and may be compelled, at her husband's will, to follow him about like a dog. Well might John Stuart Mill say, "There exist no legal slaves among us except the mistress of every house." It can only be ignorance of the real tendency of our laws which makes any one assert, that where the interests of men and women clash, they are not lenient to the former and unjust to the latter.'

'Of course this is a convenient peg on which to hang their claim to the suffrage,' said Major Knagge; 'but it seems to me, women ought not—er—to forget how much they owe to men in the many laws that have been made for their protection. Polygamy has been done away with by the men of civilised

* See an article by Mr. Macfarlane. *Macmillan*, March 1882.

nations, at a sacrifice to self, and entirely in the interests of women.'

'Do you think so?' asked the Professor. 'I am rather inclined to believe that, even in the far past, some men were clear-sighted enough to recognise that any great progress was impossible for a nation practising polygamy, such marriages being opposed to anything like real morality, and destructive in both sexes of true nobleness of character or purity of mind. As the woman is the man is, and by degrading the one, you drag both down.'

'I have thought a great many times,' said Sir Henry, presently, 'over what you were saying the other day about divorce, and the legalisation of vice. I did not question even then, you may recollect, the injustice of refusing a wife relief unless her husband has been guilty of cruelty, though he may have outraged all her most sacred feelings and been guilty of open infidelity; but in regard to that other vexed question, and the comparatively recent Acts of 1866 and 1869, I believe there is a very strong feeling in their favour, especially amongst doctors and other scientific men, on the utilitarian principle of "the greatest good of the greatest number;" they maintain that the indignities inflicted on women of doubtful reputation are justifiable as being a safeguard and protection to virtuous wives.'

'And why?—But again because our laws and our practice, too, in many cases, unfortunately, are based upon the false assumption that men are not bound by the same law of moral purity as women. Nothing can be more degrading or demoralising than this legal sanctioning of vice, upon any grounds whatsoever. I do not know that I myself should have had much to say against these Acts, if the law had been enforced equally against men and women, and the latter were put under the care of competent physicians of their own sex, that would change the whole aspect of the question; but these are matters that the majority of male legislators do not trouble themselves about; and those who do, know full well that the smallest

attempt to subject men to similar treatment would be the death-knell of any Government.'

'It is a difficult question,' said Sir Henry, 'and I am afraid on this point as on many others "law" and "justice" are not mutually involved terms.'

'Blackstone,' replied Professor Wray, 'defined law as "a means of sustaining justice and the right;" but we require no further proof, I think, of how far our laws are from coming up to this standard than is to be found in the legal position of women.'

'I must confess,' said Sir Henry, 'that until I talked with you upon this subject, I was inclined to think that our laws upon the whole were fairly satisfactory, and that when women —my sister for instance—spoke of inequality, they had no basis of fact to support their theories.'

'That is, no doubt, the case with a great many good men who appear indifferent or even opposed to women's suffrage; I believe with most earnest and candid thinkers, it is only ignorance of the wrongs women have endured, and still endure from unjust legislation, which prevents their arriving by the most obvious course of reasoning at the point of supporting with all their power every effort for the extension to women of direct political influence. These laws could never have existed in their present form if women had had a voice in making them, or been in any way properly represented. Is it not, for instance, flagrantly unjust, that in a matter of inheritance the law always asks the sex of a claimant before it can decide upon the disposition of any property? If a man leaves a legacy to a deceased wife's sister, she has to pay ten per cent as a stranger in blood; but should he wish to marry this stranger in blood, the law forbids the banns. Why? Because she is his sister. It is convenient also to ignore the "stranger-in-blood" theory when *she* leaves *him* a legacy so that he may not have to pay more than three per cent.'

'"The glorious uncertainty of the British law" has become proverbial,' said Sir Henry, 'not without some cause, I am afraid.'

'I suppose,' said Major Knagge, who, having strolled off a few paces 'to have a look at the weather'—that most interesting of all things to Englishmen—had just rejoined them, 'I suppose, eh, you think the law of entail very—er—unjust to your fair clients; but they have no more to complain of in that matter, than younger sons.'

'Younger sons have at anyrate opportunities denied to women of earning a distinguished position, or, at least, a competence, besides many means of making their grievances known; but as regards either men or women, I do not think I am peculiar in holding that the old feudal laws of primogeniture and entail are, as applied to modern social conditions, a great mistake. Time was, when fiefdom involving military service it was more or less desirable that landed property should be in the hands of males, and no other system would, perhaps, have answered equally well; but, like many another custom, which once had a certain fitness to a given order of things, these laws have now become obsolete and absurd.'

'I tell you where I do think entail presses very heavily,' said Sir Henry, 'and that is where there is no son, and everything passes away from the daughters to some distant and perhaps unknown relation. A neighbour of mine, a well-known baronet in the west country, died a few years since leaving a widow and three children—two girls and a boy; the property, which is a fine one, was left in the hands of trustees, of whom the mother was one, until the son, then only ten, should be of age. Unfortunately the boy did not long survive his father, and on his death the mother and sisters had to leave their home and subsist as best they could upon the slenderest of incomes, since by the law of entail everything went to a distant, and not very creditable, relation, who, to the relief of his family, had years before betaken himself to the Colonies.'

'I quite believe,' said the Professor, 'that in many cases, if the titles, the estates, the headship, of a family had fallen to a women, many a noble race would have been saved from de-

generating. However it was not to the laws of entail, but to those of intestacy as they affect women that I referred more particularly; in this case not only do sons succeed before daughters, and brothers before sisters, uncles before aunts, relations on the father's side before relations on the mother's; but if a man dies childless, his father succeeds without question to his personalty, whereas if he has no father, his mother only takes an equal share with his brothers and sisters; in some things we seem to have retrograded rather than progressed, I think; for in Hebrew times, women shared an inheritance on their father's death.* Amongst the early Greeks, daughters succeeded equally with sons, while the man who divorced his wife, was obliged to refund her dowry or pay her so much a month by way of compensation. In the Egyptian Museum at the Louvre, is a collection of legal documents, family contracts, wills, &c., dating from the time of Alexander the Great to the twentieth year of Ptolemy Energetes, and these which have been deciphered by M. Revillont, prove, without question, that Diodorus Siculus spoke only the truth when he asserted that amongst the most civilised of ancient peoples property was, to a great extent, in female hands. A certain Patma, for instance, made his wife, Taotem, a bridal gift, and also agree to pay her a yearly allowance secured upon his property; after a time becoming deeply in his wife's debt, he is found agreeing to yield up everything he has, unless he can clear himself in three years, and finally these documents show all his possessions carefully inventoried and sold up in satisfaction of this claim. In Arabia, before the advent of Mahomet, a wife had a regular dower, and annual allowance which she was perfectly free to dispose of during her lifetime or by will. Even in much and deservedly-abused Turkey, I believe to this day, daughters succeed equally with sons to houses and lands while they inherit one-third of any personal property.'

'I never heard, however,' said Sir Henry, 'of our laws in

* Numb. xxvii. 7, 8.

regard to intestacy pressing particularly upon women, for very few men who are husbands and fathers are so culpably foolish as to neglect to make a will, I suppose; and unentailed property is often, I think, divided with great fairness between sons and daughters, all, from the eldest to the youngest, sharing alike.'

'The justice of individual men often rectifies matters, no doubt,' replied Professor Wray; 'but I do not think, as I have said before, that in this fact there is any excuse for the injustice of our laws. There is another flagrant inequality, by the way, of which women have a right to complain, namely, that although it is a fundamental doctrine of the British Constitution that all persons should be tried by their peers, on the strength of which even foreigners can claim that half the jury shall consist of their own countrymen, yet women are always tried by a male judge and male jury.'

'You would not, my dear sir, you would not, surely,' cried the Major, with a burst of unrestrained laughter, 'advocate admitting women on the bench and in the jury-box as well as everywhere else.'

'Disabilities of sex,' replied the Professor, 'are bound to share the fate of disabilities of creed, and be one after another swept away; and, I think, when the idea which amuses you becomes fact, as assuredly sooner or later it will do, both men and women will gain by it; it is high time that the exclusive right which men have assumed to sit in judgment upon women should be questioned. That our common-law is not always based upon common sense I think I have already shown; but in nothing is this more marked than in the fiction that a woman with a male judge, a male advocate, a male jury, is tried according to that great constitutional principle upon which we have no right to pride ourselves until it is applied without distinction to all alike. How is it possible that any man can understand a woman's position and feelings? Take, for instance, the case of a poor girl charged with infanticide, when it comes to the administration of a law which presses so cruelly hard upon the weak and unfortunate, is it possible that the

most able and well-meaning man can here put himself in the place of a frenzied mother, who in terror, anguish, fear of exposure, amounting often to temporary insanity, has ended a young life just begun? Can he, think you, understand the feelings which, for the moment only perhaps, have deadened in an unfortunate girl those maternal instincts that under happier circumstances would naturally have been hers? Happy wives, good mothers, have acknowledged before now, that in childbirth there are times when their brain and entire nervous system have been so disordered as to make the idea of destroying the immediate cause of their suffering have nothing horrifying about it; and if, surrounded by love, the objects of skilful treatment, and the most anxious solicitude, good women become, to a certain extent, irresponsible for their actions; what must be the position of the friendless solitary, facing her misery with the consciousness that in secrecy alone lies any hope of her being from henceforth other than a pariah and an outcast? I tell you men are not fit to sit in judgment on such cases. It makes one's blood boil to think of the hundreds of defenceless girls, who, more sinned against than sinning, have been roughly hurried to the gallows in compliance with a man-made, man-administered, and ruthlessly cruel law.'

'I think gentle and pitiful women,' said Sir Henry, 'are perhaps the ones best fittest to deal with such cases.'

'My dear Sir,' replied Major Knagge, 'they would be ten times harder than the men; give me a woman if you want a hard judge for the frail of her own sex.'

'I am afraid your experience,' said Sir Henry, 'like a policeman's life, "is not a happy one;" if there were not more wise and tender-hearted, than hard and cruel women in the world, we should come off badly, I think, with all our sins.'

'But in regard to this question of women being tried by their peers,' said Professor Wray, 'is it not only the guilty, but often the modest and innocent women, who, in questions of seduction, of marriage, and divorce, for instance, suffer most bitterly. The outraged maiden, the injured wife, the bereaved

mother, might under wiser conditions be saved the ignomony of being grossly questioned in public by men. I know as a fact, that many a woman has endured in silence a wrong that ought to have been redressed, simply because she *could* not make up her mind to discuss the most sacred and delicate subjects with men only, and that in a public court.'

'I still maintain,' said Major Knagge, 'that women are the gainers more often than not by being in the—er—hands of men. Do you think now, that a jury of women would ever give the plaintiff in a breach of promise case such damages as they get from men, especially if they are young and good-looking, and it is—is—er proverbial that women criminals are leniently dealt with.'

'Since,' said Professor Wray, 'it is necessary to become a criminal in order to enjoy this privilege, it is not much consolation to the law-abiding, while if anything were wanting to show the defective administration of the law, it would be that argument of yours in regard to young and pretty women being able to extort heavy damages. When such questions become matters of feeling instead of strict impartial justice, the results often is that those who least deserve a benefit are the ones to get it. I venture humbly to think that the sooner actions for breach of promise are done away with, the better, being based as they are on the false assumption that the loss of a lover means more to a woman than it does to a man.'

'Is it not you who are hard upon women now?' asked Sir Henry, 'a man who breaks his troth with a girl hinders her chances of marriage, and I think this is rightly taken to be a substantial injury.'

'I grant you that, so long as women are taught to look upon marriage as a means of livelihood; but the true remedy for this state of things, which is nothing less than degrading to womanhood, lies in educating girls to realise the blessing of self-help, and affording to all women, not only to those of the so-called "working-classes" the means of self-support. It is not the most noble and womanly, but rather the bold and designing

of their sex who take advantage of the opportunities afforded them to fine a recreant lover and apply the money thus obtained as a salve to their wounded feelings. It is so truly British, this universal belief in golden ointment by way of cure for every description of mental affliction, whether it be the husband's wounded honour, or the maiden's lacerated heart. Sensible women most likely say to themselves in thinking of a recreant lover; "Well, a fickle and inconstant man is not likely to make the best husband; it is better I should know his character now than later, and though I was foolish enough to be deceived at first, now my eyes are opened, I ought to congratulate myself on my escape." '

'Very likely you are right,' said Sir Henry; 'at the same time, I think where actual pecuniary loss has been sustained, as in the case of a governess or servant who has given up her situation in order to be married, some compensation is due.'

'Yes, moderate damages, I think, in such a case ought to be allowed; but if you are not tired there is one point that marks more strongly, perhaps, than any other, the want of women's influence in the legislature—I refer to its perfunctory and unsatisfactory manner of dealing with questions concerning the protection of young girls. Instead of being the subject of debate in the House, the "Assaults on Young Persons" Bill for the legal protection of girls up to the age of fourteen, was examined in the privacy of Committee and run through an almost empty House; while to show the interest taken by members in a measure which women rightly considers of vital importance, when the bill was passed in 1880, only eighty-six members were present out of six hundred and fifty, while the age of protection was lowered from fourteen to thirteen by a majority of forty-one, and so the opportunity of putting an extra curb upon licentiousness was lost. Women are not considered capable of managing their own affairs until they are twenty-one years of age. In respect of the labour laws they are not considered adults till eighteen, and yet a little girl of thir-

teen is held to be perfectly competent to take care of her honour and protect herself against the designs of unprincipled men. Is it not time that women's voices should be empowered to make themselves heard in our legislature on behalf of the little children of the poor? Are not thoughful women justified in complaining of the light way in which offences against their sex are treated by the law, its makers and interpreters, knowing as they must, that if a poor girl is, under promise of marriage, ruined and deserted by a heartless scoundrel, he goes scot free. For men are not charged with concealment of paternity, and the destruction of her life's prospects are of no account, though, certainly, if her father can prove that he has in consequence lost her services for any period, *he* may claim a small sum in compensation. Parliament is very much given to making a sort of compromise between ancient laws and modern views, and instead of redressing an injustice out and out, to just nibbling at the consequences, and thus it is that while things have been changing all around us, a woman's legal position has remained in many ways unchanged; while, too often, legislation intended for their benefit has, as in the Workshops and Factory Act, which you remember we discussed the other day, really meant further restraint upon their personal liberty; a harder struggle for existence; a rendering of the helpless still more helpless; lowering the wages of some, depriving others of work, and throwing hundreds more upon the streets.'

'And supposing women have a few genuine grievances,' retorted the Major, 'they've no right to forget how much they ought to be thankful for, how much better off they are now than they used to be.'

'I do not deny that; we are a long way ahead, for instance, of the ancient Hindoos, who, two thousand years before the Christian era, decreed that "if a man goes on a journey his wife shall not divert herself, play, nor shall see any public show, nor shall laugh, nor shall dress herself with jewels and fine clothes, nor shall see dancing nor hear music, nor shall sit

in the window, nor shall ride out, nor shall behold anything choice or rare, but shall fasten well the house door and remain private; and shall not eat any dainty victuals, and shall not view herself in a mirror, she shall never exercise herself in any such agreeable employment during the absence of her husband;" and, by way of climax, "it is proper for every woman on her husband's death, to burn herself in the fire with his corpse." I know the hardships of the past are sometimes made a text for preaching a sermon to women of the present day upon the many privileges they enjoy, and of how grateful they ought to be to us in consequence; but I take it there is rather more room for improvement still, than for self-congratulation.'

'No doubt,' said Sir Henry, 'the fearless reformer is much to be preferred to the self-righteous pharisee. I confess myself conquered,' he added frankly; 'here is my hand on it. I will have nothing more to do with the opponents of woman's suffrage. And while I am in the confessional I may as well acknowledge,' he continued, taking out his pocket-book, 'I have been making some notes of our conversations that I may be prepared for any future emergencies. Would you mind just running through the list of those things you have been proving so conclusively that women have every right to claim, as to convince me in spite of myself.'

'In one word—equality; and this implies their participating equally with boys in the advantages of our endowed schools, colleges, and training institutions, medical, legal, and theological; a right to the elective franchise, that as citizens they may have a voice in the making of the laws under which they live, and an equal share in the regulation and administration of affairs both national and municipal, which, in many instances are still so unjust in restraining the productiveness of their labour, and in shutting them out from many branches of employment for which they are well fitted. Again, every mother has a right to claim equally with a father the possession of their joint offspring; to obtain release from the husband who

has been untrue to his marriage-vows, whether cruelty can or cannot be proved against him. Women, too, have a right to protest against the preference of males, and male issue in the division of estates; the many evils which arise from the insufficient protection afforded to young girls, and the connivance, or rather, perhaps I should say, the indifference of the law, to crimes of violence by husbands against wives. These are some of the chief points we have touched upon I think; but, of course, there are many of less importance which it is impossible to remember at a moment's notice.'

'Thank you. It will be a long time, I am afraid, before I reach your standpoint, either in strength of conviction, or force of reasoning; but you may count upon me as an ally in future, though it may not be a very powerful one.'

'I am by no means sure of that; there has, of course, on this as on every other question, been a great deal of both sense and nonsense talked on both sides; but I have seen enough of you to know that you will not add to the last.'

'It is sometimes very hard,' his companion replied thoughtfully, 'to find the good and true and eliminate the bad and false—but what has become of the Major?' he exclaimed as that gentleman's portly figure disappeared around the corner of the house, leaving a trail of blue smoke behind it.'

'Oh, he is disgusted at your public profession of faith, which I have listened to with the greatest possible edification, Harry dear,' said his sister; who in riding habit, hat and gloves, stood just within the drawing-room, a dainty little figure framed by the sash of the draped French window.

'I think we may speed the parting guest,' was his reply, 'since the coming ones are so well worth welcoming,' and his glance strayed from his sister to her friend as they stepped together through the open window into the verandah; the slight blush which was Madeline's only reply, was not wanted, he thought, to add to her attractions, for she possessed just the face and form to look their best in the grave simplicity of a dark blue riding-habit with no ornament but a single tea-rose bud, ap-

parently fastening the plain linen collar at her throat. But whatever Madeline may have done, Mrs. Silverton had not lost the gift of speech.

'I could have told you long ago,' she said, 'that our dear departed friend, who shall be nameless, only listened to you because having determined the case beforehand, he knew it could do him no harm to discuss it. He put up the shutters of his mind long ago,' she added; in a half-whisper, 'and there is so much dust in the chinks that the rays of reason have no chance of getting through. But you remember we agreed to ride at twelve unless the weather proved too dreadful, if like Péthion, the once Mayor of Paris, we West-country people were to say, "there will be nothing done to-day, it is raining," we might as well be buried at once. Harry, will you ring the stable-bell?' But Sir Henry's senses were apparently at this moment all absorbed in the serious process of buttoning Madeline's glove, and he was conscious of nothing but the presence of the fair girl who had created such a revolution in the feelings with which he anticipated meeting her but a fortnight ago. Truth to tell he was growing very seriously in love with his sister's friend, none the less, perhaps, for her apparent unconsciousness, and the self-reliance which made it difficult for him to approach her with any definite declaration of his feelings, still more to discover anything of hers.

'I will ring for the horses,' said Professor Wray, with a quiet smile, as he met Mrs. Silverton's amused glance. Following her presently into the drawing-room, and taking up carelessly a book which lay on an ottoman just within the window, a copy of the Bon Gaulthier Ballads, it opened strangely enough at the lines—

> 'It is the most infernal bore
> Of all the bores I know,
> To have a friend who's lost his heart
> A short time ago.'

which was not exactly how the Professor would have stated the

situation, but was sufficiently near to make him hand it to his hostess, and so by a tacit understanding they rode out together to meet the breaking clouds, and back again at luncheon-time in the same order; treating their companions with an indifference which they must have been most amiable not to resent, if they noticed it.'

CHAPTER XIII.

'Die Engel, die nennen es Himmelsfreud,
Die Teufel, die nennen es Hëllandleid
Die Menschen, die nennen es—Liebe.'

HEINE.

'Women of a softer mood,
Surprised by men when scarce awake to life,
Will sometimes only hear the first word, love,
And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent so that dear love go with it.
I do not blame such women, though, for love,
They pick much oakum. Earth's fanatics make
Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me* your work
Is not the best for,—nor your love the best,
. . . . . .
I too have my vocation,—work to do.'

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh.*

CHAPTER XIII.

A MISTAKE.

The most natural conclusion to draw from the fact that Madeline and her companion were so absorbed as not to notice that during the whole ride they were practically left to a *tête-a-tête*, was, that they were quite contented with an arrangement which had been so cleverly contrived by their young hostess that it seemed, like all well-concerted schemes, to be the result of an accident. And yet, on their return, any close observer could not have failed to see that something was wrong; their was no exchange, as usual, of sparkling words and glances, of happy laughter, indeed they seemed rather to avoid looking at each other. Sir Henry, it is true, helped his companion to dismount with his usual courtesy and deference, but without speaking, while his face might have served as a model for the 'Knight of the Rueful Countenance.' As for Madeline, an almost inaudible 'Thank you,' was her only acknowledgement as, looking very pale, she passed with lowered head into the house, upstairs, and straight to her own room. Neptune, the sole spectator of this almost dumb show, appeared much distressed thereby; he ran a few paces into the hall after his new friend, then back again to his master, rubbing against him and pushing his head underneath the only hand within reach; finding all his efforts to attract attention, however, were of no use, he crouched down with a low whine, followed by a long drawn sigh, which said as plainly as a dog could, that the world was very evidently out of joint, that human beings were as disappointing as incomprehensible, and that, in short, life, under these conditions, was not worth living.

'You surely are not thinking of going back yet to town,'

Sir Henry had said, soon after they had started, in reply to a remark of her companion's as to something she must attend to in London early in the following week; 'what *shall* we do without you?'

'The loss is mine, I think,' said Madeline. 'I have enjoyed my visit to Crag's Nest almost too much; for I have already stayed longer than I ought to have done. I have only feared sometimes that the discussions I enjoyed so thoroughly were rather a bore to you.'

'Quite the contrary, I assure you; and as for Major Knagge he perfectly revels in an argument upon any subject whatever. I think he is something like John Wilson Croker whom, as some one said, even death could not silence, for he would be sure to argue with the recording angel about the dates of his sins. Please do not look shocked.'

'No; I was only fearing that in our warmth sometimes perhaps we said some rather cutting things to our opponent-in-chief.'

'So much the better, let him appropriate them by all means, "if they only fit him there is nothing left to be desired," as Lord Kenyon said of the man who stole his gouty shoes.'

'Still sometimes I am afraid one is apt to be intolerant even when fighting against intolerance; it is so difficult for one person to see where another's horizon is.' Madeline in her brightest moments never looked so sweet and winning as in these moods of self-distrust, and for a moment there was a wistful, almost worshipping look in her companion's eyes as he asked,—

'But is it so absolutely necessary that you should return before the autumn has regularly set in? You will find London quite empty I am sure.'

'Oh quite,' she laughed, 'not a creature to be seen; grass growing in Regent Street, and Oxford Street a desert from the Marble Arch to Mudie's.'

'But you know what I mean.'

'Yes; that 'society,' so-called, has decently veiled its windows and its household gods, and betaken itself to the country, leaving its balconies of flowers, and its faithful puss very often, to perish for want of proper care. I cannot go about with a hose and water-cart; but I must plead guilty to spending a small fortune in milk, for it quite makes my heart ache in the hot, dusty September days to see the poor drooping plants upon the window-ledges denied a drop of water, and the still more unfortunate cats wandering round the deserted squares, getting weaker and thinner, and more woe-begone, every day.'

'It is disgraceful,' said Sir Henry, 'no one has any right to neglect animals in that way; but I expect it is very often the housekeeper in whose charge they are left, who is to blame; don't you think so.'

'No doubt; most of the people I know personally would no more neglect a cat or dog than they would a child, but that there are others who care nothing at all of what becomes, at anyrate of the former, is only too evident.'

'Now you acknowledge that your friends are nearly all out of town, so why need you hurry away?'

'I am afraid I must; I have at least three definite engagements for next week only, and more for the week after.'

'I did not know that all London could offer such an amount of dissipation at this season of the year. Are they dances may I ask?'

'Oh, I will not pretend to deny that I like an occasional dance very much,' she replied with an answering smile, though still skillfully evading a direct reply; 'but there is nothing of that sort going on now, and it certainly would not at any time tempt me away from this lovely country and such good friends.'

'But you have not told me yet why you are so inflexible.'

'Am I required to give a detailed account of all my actions?' she answered, with a glance slightly defiant, and a petulant expression, which, though transient as piquant,

showed that under other conditions, with a less cultivated mind, and with no serious aims in life, Madeline would possibly have developed into a very different type of woman; one who, dangerous in coquetry, might have charmed, but could never have raised the men who came under the spell of her attractions. But the mood was over almost before her companion had time to feel surprised at this new and unexpected attitude, and it was in her usual unaffected, reasonable manner she added, 'If you really are so kind as to take an interest in my pursuits, I do not see why I should make a mystery of what is absolutely common-place. For one thing I have promised to take part in a debate at University College; then my little cousin is reading up for an examination and declares she will never pass without my help; there is the working-women's club too, and seeing that I helped to start it, and became to a certain extent responsible for its welfare, I have been neglecting my duties there shamefully.'

'You are on the committee then I suppose?'

'Yes, and my place lately has been taken by a friend, but now she is obliged to join her people in Scotland next week, therefore I feel doubly bound to return, for there is always a great deal to be done.'

'I do not understand the working of that sort of thing; on what principle is it managed?'

'Your knowledge of the "United Service," or the "Athenæum," or the "Savage Club," would certainly not be much help to you, for this club is established simply and solely in the interests of working women and girls. It is in a measure self-supporting, but at the discretion of the committee members are sometimes admitted even when unable to pay the small sum usually required. We have had some liberal donations in the way of books, and are getting together quite a little library. Unfortunately, all our people cannot read or write, but those who wish it can be taught; several bring work, and learn in preference to mend and make their clothes; plain cooking is, of course, included in our programme, while

my friend, Dr. Alice King, gives us generally one evening in the week, and talks to the women about sanitary matters, how to make their homes clean and fresh so far as may be, and keep themselves and their children in health; she also tells them something about simple medicine and surgery, so that mothers and elder sisters of families may be, to some extent, prepared to meet any ordinary emergency.'

'And do you find that poor women appreciate this sort of thing?'

'Past all our expectations; though we are always taking more rooms we cannot even yet receive half those who are anxious to join. It is quite astonishing to see what interest some of them take in discussing such subjects as "Food and its Preparation," "Clothing and Materials," "The Dwelling, Warming, Cleaning and Ventilation," "Washing Materials and their Uses," "Rules for Health," "The management of a Sick-room," "Cottage Expenditure," "Incomes and Savings," and so on.'

'It shows my ignorance that I should have thought the attractions of a cheap Music Hall would have far outweighed anything of that sort which you could offer them.'

'With a few this may be the case, but with a very large number of working women it is not so. Soon after we started this club and night school, a friend of mine, a literary man who is always looking in out-of-the-way nooks and corners for odd types of character, overheard two poor women discussing in a tavern their own position and prospects, and the lot of women in general, and presently one of them, *à propos* of the advantages men have for passing their time after they have left work, summed up the question with a sigh and an expressive shake of the head, "Oh, my dear, in this world, 'tis all for the men." Whereupon he entered into conversation with these moralising matrons, and told them some ladies and gentlemen had determined that, as regards clubs at anyrate, things should not be "all for the men," and if they would come any evening to our rooms they should hear about it.

These women are now amongst our most regular attendants, they have quite ceased to grumble and rarely visit their once favourite tavern ; there is a marked improvement, too, in there manners and appearance, and what is better still, I hear from a friend in whose district they live, that their homes, such as they are, share in the change.'

'I am glad to hear that ; for I know many worthy people object to efforts of this kind as regards women, on the plea that it encourages them to neglect their homes.'

"If they could only see some of these so-called "homes," they would be convinced in spite of prejudice, I am sure, that it must be an advantage for poor women and girls to pass a few hours occasionally in an atmosphere, both morally and physically, purer than that to which they are accustomed. Besides, there is a *crêche* where little children, too young to be left, may be brought and well looked after. No one thinks that similar institutions planned to wean men from the public-house are time and money thrown away, and women of the same class, unfortunately, want the counter-attraction just as urgently."

'I quite see,' said Sir Henry, 'that so long as men spend their wages or a large portion of them in drink, they cannot expect their half-starved wives not to spend their small earnings, or even pawn their clothes, to buy forgetfulness at the gin-shop for a few hours at least. No doubt any scheme which brings them, poor things, if only for a little while, under more wholesome influences, must be a blessing.'

'And the husbands, and fathers, and brothers are not entirely shut out,' said Madeline ; 'one evening in the week, at least, we have an amateur concert, dissolving views, readings, a popular lecture, or some form of entertainment to which they are admitted. We shall enlist your help some day, perhaps, if you will give it.'

'Gladly, I do not doubt that though one may not see much change at first, these things must have a humanising influence People are beginning to awake to the fact that the poor want

something more from us than almsgiving; education, too, will do much for them, we shall see a great change in another generation, I expect.'

'I am sure of it,' said Madeline; 'through the co-operation of our board schoolmistress we have established a class for girls who are in the last half of their time at school, and who like to come one evening in the week for practical lessons in different branches of housework. We do not expect to make finished cooks, or housemaids, or lady's-maids of them; but they will at any rate be better fitted for service than if they had gone without any instruction straight from school or from a disorganised and thriftless home.'

'That is an excellent idea; but I think it is a pity Board Schools do not give special instruction in such matters.'

'It is a difficult question; each pupil, you see, is expected to receive a certain quantum of general education, and the time cannot be spared to make girls domestic servants, laundry women, dressmakers, any more than to teach boys the rudiments of shoemaking, gardening, or whatever they will have to support themselves by in the future; such an attempt would only distract the minds of the children and overstrain their teachers in the vain efforts to master a multiplicity of subjects.'

'That is true,' replied Sir Henry; 'a preparatory school should be a place rather for the development of the intellectual faculties than for the teaching of any handicraft; that must, I see, come after. More schools of technical instruction, partly self-supporting, but subsidised by Government, are what we want.'

'Yes; but meanwhile I do not think it is time wasted to try in a small way to supply the lack of these.'

'Certainly not; and you find it a success?' asked Sir Henry, not that he had much doubt about the matter, for he thought if her fellow-workers possessed even half Madeline's brightness, her energy, her gentle winning manner towards social inferiors, few efforts of theirs would be likely to fail.

'Yes, indeed; we have been quite surprised to find how

kindly the girls take to it; they have even begged to have classes two evenings in the week instead of one; but we have not been able to manage it as yet, not for want of pupils, but of teachers, who are both capable and willing to undertake the work. However, we shall do better by-and-by, I hope; so many people are out of town just now, and in these classes poor Aunt Helen has been lately single-handed. But I really ought to beg your pardon for inflicting my hobbies upon you.'

'Do not apologise, I am very much interested, for I can quite believe that your working-women's club, and the classes in connexion with it, must be a very valuable means of education for the poor. The benefit of ladies' clubs, however, is not so obvious, I think; I am told that they are often a failure.'

'Oh, where have you been to get such ideas?' said Madeline, laughing; 'with the "Albemarle," and the "Grosvenor," and the "Somerville," and several others, all admitting women, and "all alive and growing," as the flower-sellers say. One or two institutions of the kind to begin with, it is true, did not hold together; but that a few false starts, such as have occurred in the case of many similar schemes organized by men, do not mean ultimate failure, events have proved. If clubs did nothing else but teach women to work with one another, surely this alone would justify their existence; and a place like the "Somerville," with its very moderate subscription, and admitting as it does women members only, is, as I know, an unspeakable blessing to the ever-increasing number of gently-bred girls, who, as daily governesses, art students, or writers, are earning their living or preparing to do so. I assure you they appreciate the advantages of getting rest, quiet, and food at reasonable charges, and some mental relaxation in the shape of social intercourse, books, papers, periodicals, in the quasi-privacy of a well-ordered woman's club. Besides this, the lectures, the lending library, the debates in connexion with it, must be a valuable means of education to a large number of women, who, being thus brought together, improve each other and learn

toleration for other's opinions, as well as the value of organized effort and co-operation. But, as I said before, you must be getting quiet tired of me and my hobbies,' she added, noticing that for once her companion had nothing to say.

'No, indeed; you quite mistake my momentary silence; I am only humbled by the thought of your unselfishness and energy.'

'I cannot see that there is any unselfishness in doing what one likes; as for energy, I think that is more or less constitutional, and I should not have said *you* belonged to the *roi fainéant* type.'

'About some things perhaps I can be energetic enough; but when I compare myself with you—here have I been some half dozen years longer in the world, and have had just as many chances to make myself useful, and yet what have I done? I am a good-for-nothing sort of fellow at the best, I am afraid.'

'I think we all feel that sort of self-dissatisfaction at times,' said Madeline, more gravely than she had yet spoken; 'that sense of the infinite misery and injustice which exist among us, and of the infinitely little we, as individuals, have done to make things better.'

'One wants superhuman energy and ability in these days to accomplish anything worth speaking of.'

'But don't you think every one possesses some quality of heart or mind, or head, capable of making an impression for good or evil upon the world around. Great, original thinkers, perhaps, are rare; but I should not have said you were one of those who are content to take their opinions at second hand, and like to act in mobs,' Madeline said, smiling, as she contrasted her companion's estimate of himself with what she had heard others speak of him; 'and although it has been said that eagles fly alone, and silly sheep go in flocks, it seems to me that what is better than aiming at doing something entirely new, is to try and do more perfectly what has been done before. I am inclined to envy you your opportunities.'

'*You* envy *me?*' Sir Henry exclaimed in unaffected astonishment.

'Yes, truly, with your tenantry in Cornwall only waiting for you to take the lead in any measures of reform; with a seat assured you in the place where of all others you may make the most effectual protest against injustice.'

'I have been out of England, as you know, for some years, and have been a self-indulgent, lazy beggar most of the time, but I am trying to make some plans for the future. I know without asking what your opinion is, that it is high time for me to be the architect rather than the creator of circumstances, and I really mean to turn over a new leaf. I am tired of wandering, too; I suppose there comes a time in every man's life when no amount of freedom can compensate for the want of a home.'

'But that you are fortunate enough to possess. I am told that Tregarthen is one of the loveliest places in the west of England.'

'Seriously,' he replied, 'do you really think that a house and park and half a dozen servants constitute a home? A man who learns for the first time to love,' he added in a lower and more earnest tone; 'who feels that there is one woman in the world whose presence would make the most wretched hovel homelike to him, is not likely to look upon any place unshared by her, with eyes of great affection.'

Madeline's only answer was to quicken her pace, upon which Black Prince also broke into a trot, and for some minutes not a word was spoken on either side; but presently, as they approached one of the almost perpendicular hills for which that part of the country is famous, the horses of their own accord slackened speed.'

'Madeline!' Sir Henry's voice was so beseeching that involuntarily his companion half turned her face towards him. 'You cannot misunderstand me; you must know that I love you.' Still silent. 'Dear—give me one word of hope.'

'Oh, why will you spoil our friendship by speaking so?'

she answered, impulsively; 'things were so pleasant before. Is friendship, then, between a man and woman impossible?'

'Between *us*, yes; for, Madeline, I can no more help loving you than I can help breathing.'

'It is time for us to turn back, I think,' said Madeline, in a more chilling voice than he had ever heard before. 'If you are as generous and unselfish, Sir Henry, as I have always believed, you will not refer to this subject again.'

'But—forgive me—why may I not? Are you quite indifferent to me? I will wait; I will wait patiently half a lifetime if you will only give me some hope.'

'I cannot deceive you,' she said gently, 'it is quite impossible.'

'Do not, for pity's sake, speak so decidedly! Have you had no dreams, like other girls, of a future to be shared by one who should so reverence and love you that your two lives would always, whatever might betide, be one of perfect and entire sympathy.'

'I have had my dreams,' she answered slowly, 'but not of that. And after all, What is this picture you draw of an earthly Paradise? Is it anything better or nobler than a species of dual selfishness; two people living so absolutely in and for each other that the claims of humanity are certain to be forgotten wherever they happen to clash with the lover's ideal of domestic bliss?'

'With your example before me I could not be selfish, Madeline; if you could only trust me, it should be the effort of my life to help you in your work, not hinder you.'

'You will live, I hope, to be the helper of some better woman; of one, perhaps, who would not find domestic life any hindrance to the work she may have undertaken. With me it is different. Feeling, as I do, personally on the subject, it would not be right for me to listen to you any longer. I am very, very sorry,' she added, catching sight of the look of intense pain with which her words were received. 'I do hope we may yet be friends; you will not let this episode, which

after a time we both shall have forgotten, make any difference to your plans for the future, will you?' she pleaded. 'You will let me feel proud of our friendship?'

'I will try not to be unworthy of having known you,' he replied, raising to his lips the gloved hand she had held out to him. 'But is this to be all? I hoped—I dare say it was presumptuous—but I hoped—Oh, Madeline, is it no use?'

'None,' she answered firmly, though she turned away to hide her quivering lips. 'I am afraid I must have been to blame somehow; I am more grieved than I can tell you.'

'Oh, do not mind,' he said, with an exquisite thoughtfulness for her in the midst of his own acute sorrow. 'I deceived myself, that is all, you are not to blame.'

But for some reason Madeline apparently did mind very much, for the tears kept welling up into her eyes, and it was only by the strongest effort that she retained her self command during the remainder of their silent ride, and until safely within the walls of her own room. The *might have been* never appears so attractive as when we have just put it away from us. 'Had she done wrong?' Madeline asked herself, as scalding tears fell upon the pillow in which she buried her throbbing brow. 'It was all so unexpected, she could not see things clearly; had she mistaken her feelings of friendship and regard, and did she love this man? Well, in any case it would be better not to give way; he would soon get over any little disappointment; she had her work to do, so had he, and both would do it better untrammeled by personal considerations. No; it was evident there was no love on her side, or she could not reason about it in this fashion; so things were better as they stood;' and yet when her friend and hostess came by-and-by to look after her, she found this physically and mentally strong young woman prostrated by a violent headache, a matter of no small astonishment to one who, in common with Madeline's other intimates, had often at college envied her exceptionally fine physique. But conversation was out of the question, and the most innocent and well-meaning of little matchmakers, as she sat gently

bathing her friend's temples with eau-de-cologne, thought the darkened room, with its ill-defined contents and unwonted disarrangement, was a very fair picture of the condition of her mind, which had been troubled and mystified already beyond measure by her brother's announcement at luncheon that the business which had been so urgent a fortnight ago, and which had, by common consent she thought, been indefinitely postponed, now called for his presence in town to-morrow afternoon, and that therefore he must start by an early train. It seemed to her as if the spirit of unrest had suddenly seized all her guests, for the suggestion of work to be done in London roused the Professor like a war-cry, and he seemed to fear drifting into the ranks of the lotos-eaters, unless he, too, soon tore himself away from the delights of Crag's Nest. He was, however, finally persuaded to put off going till the following week, under the inducement of having Madeline's companionship.

And so the pleasant party was broken up some days earlier than it need have been, all through the machinations of that mischevious god who, bestowing as he does upon mankind its chiefest happiness, thinks he has the unquestionable right to take out his change in petty misunderstandings, anxieties, and annoyances.

CHAPTER XIV

'L'équilibre entre le droit de l'homme et le droit de la femme est une des conditions de la stabilité sociale.'

EMILE DE GIRARDIN.

'Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,
Because delivered down from sire to son
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.'

COWPER, *The Task.*

'Science was faith once, faith were science now
Would she but lay her bow and arrows by
And arm her with the weapons of the time.
Nothing that keeps thought out is free from thought.'

J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

'Though man a thinking being is defined,
Few use the great prerogative of mind.
How few think justly of the thinking few!
How many never think, who think they do!'

'This mutual relation is like that of the uses of every member, organ, and viscus in the body, where all and each are so consociated that every one regards its own good in another and thus in all, and all reciprocally in each other. From this universal and individual relation they act as one.' SWEDENBORG, *Heaven and Hell*, sec. 405.

'The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free:
. . . . . .
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow?' TENNYSON, *The Princess.*

'Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.'

TENNYSON, *Locksley Hall.*

'Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet.'

SHELLEY, *The Revolt of Islam*

CHAPTER XIV.

WOMEN AND EVOLUTION.

The hall of the West London Social Science Institute for Men and Women was unusually crowded one find evening early in the following November, for Professor Wray was announced to give a lecture upon 'Women and Evolution, or some Historical Aspects of the Woman Question'; a subject which appeared to possess some attractions not only for members and their friends, but for a large section of the outside public, though many were drawn, no doubt, simply by curiosity to hear what a scientific man would have to say upon a theme, which to them seemed so far removed from his usual line of thought. But however that might be, his appearance on the platform was greeted with a warmth that would have inspired a much more nervous man with confidence, in its assurance of an appreciative and indulgent hearing.

'There are, no doubt, many here to-night,' he said, after a few preliminary remarks, 'whose mental attitude is not unlike that of some gentlemen whom, as I was on the point of entering the hall this evening, I overheard discussing the subject of my proposed lecture.'

'"I can't see the connexion of women in particular with Evolution," said one. "Nor I," replied a second, "but look out for rocks ahead in the shape of Women's Rights—Distinct marks of feminine handiwork in the finest extant flint implements — Pre-historic Woman, Did she possess the suffrage? The Evolution of the Divided Skirt, &c., &c.; the lecturer is great on these subjects, I believe." "Very interesting to the

ladies, no doubt," said another, "but not much in our line; however, we need not stop long."'

'I heard no more, but I could not help thinking that those few words sounded distinctly the keynote of the very ideas I am anxious, if possible, to refute. I refer to the notion which seems to be held by a large number of people that the interests of the one sex and the interests of the other, are, if not absolutely antagonistic, yet not identical; and that the advancement of women in intelligence, in freedom, in influence, is a question by which men are little affected, and with which they have little or nothing to do. Now, in the first place, all good causes are so intimately allied that in helping forward one, we cannot fail to do something towards furthering others; and this is so in the most marked degree in the question of sex, which, according to the way it is treated, becomes either the greatest aid or the greatest obstacle to human progress. Nature has established such an absolute unity of interests between the two halves of the human family that whatever concerns women concerns *pari passu* the whole race; and it is impossible to estimate how much the world has lost by the folly which has repressed and ignored those powers, which, allowed free development, would have proved a much greater factor in man's progress from barbarism to comparative civilisation. Every disadvantage women have suffered from has, as I hope to prove to you, been so much abstracted from the common good; since the sexes, not only dually, but collectively, have a complimentary relation to each other; they are like the fabled birds of old which could not fly except in couples, each individual having but one wing, and in the place of it, upon the other side, a hook by means of which, joined, they could rise to an immense height, but, separated, were compelled to grovel helplessly upon the ground. The elevation of the one sex means the salvation of the other, the abasement of the one, the degradation of the other. In proportion as women emerge from a state of bondage, we find men throwing off the chains of ignorance and brutality; the conditions bearing upon the advancement

of women therefore must be a primary element of any inquiry into those conditions which affect the progress of mankind; and I hope to prove to you that of all the mistakes which have been made from the beginning of the world, not one perhaps has worked so much mischief as the curb that has been put upon the intellectual advancement of women; the separation and arbitrary classification of the sexes in their work, political, social, or educational. Men, with their habitual short-sight, have ignored the fact that every child born into the world is at least as much the child of his mother as of his father; that women imprint their characteristics on the race, a wise mother having a wise son, a foolish mother probably a foolish son, a sickly mother a feeble son. There is a vague notion current among non-thinkers that beauty and gentleness are the characteristics of an ideal wife; that though she may be essentially common-place, though the germs of any mental power she might have possessed have perished for want of cultivation, if her husband be fairly intellectual they are sure to have clever sons, and that the daughters, it may be reasonably hoped, will inherit her good looks, which are all that they require. But Nature more often than not, holds the balance true, by making sons turn after their mother, daughters after their father; and this is the result — the sons of a half-educated, half-developed mother, are intellectually below the average, and when their turn comes to marry they probably prefer an empty-headed wife who will not put their own stupidity to the blush; and so a family deteriorates, name and property descend in the male line, and, as usual, injustice recoils upon itself. Many people however are fortunately awaking to the fact that where women's minds and bodies are only half-developed, the race must become stunted both physically and mentally. The world has made some advance you say; true, we stand higher in the scale of civilisation than we did, for instance, some centuries ago; for there have been men in every age to recognise the truth of this, there have been women to fight hard for and win a fuller and freer existence for them-

selves, but still our progress has been a halting one, and why? Because ignorance and prejudice have debarred the majority of women from healthy brain-exercise, freedom of movement, and full physical development, and nature has, by the law of inheritance kept on equalising matters, at man's expense, and the loss of the race as a whole.

'A very few examples will suffice to show that the political and moral status of any country, its worth and durability, depend upon the position held by women in that country. There was a time in the world's history when Egypt was the most polished and civilised of nations, and in reading its history, as we are fortunate enough to be able to do in a great measure from contemporary documents, we find that they were the only people of antiquity who recognised the equality of women, neither restraining their freedom, nor degrading them by polygamy; indeed the marriage contracts that have come down to us show that the position of an Egyptian wife was in many respects superior to that assigned even now, with all our boasted progress, to the women in most European countries. In the Egypt of those days the medical profession was chiefly in the hands of women; and, perhaps, as a not unnatural consequence, mortality amongst infants and young children was remarkably small. Women were priestesses, too, and may be considered in a great measure the founders of their literature. The "Sacred Books of Isis" were deemed by Plato to be something like ten thousand years old. It was with the advent of Mahomedanism that Egypt's glory departed; and the reason is not far to seek—Mahomet while bringing about a revolution in all social matters, and working no doubt many reforms, made the incalculable error of leaving women out of his schemes of progress. A creed, which sanctions polygamy, imprisons its women, refusing them both education and civil rights, which excludes them from its churches, ranking them with pigs, dogs, and other impure animals, and which altogether subjects them to a system by means of which they are deprived of both physical stamina and moral sense, must

inevitably degrade any nation that embraces it. We need only compare the Egypt of to-day with the Egypt of the past, to recognise this. Turkey, for the same reason, committing the serious economic blunder of wasting half its available material, has not only stood still, but has step by step degenerated, dropped lower and lower in the scale of humanity, and has at last become so rotten that it is fast falling to pieces through its own inherent feebleness. Compare the position of Turkish women held like slaves in bondage, or kept as toys for man's amusement, with the freedom enjoyed by their sisters in America. Does not the effete condition of the one country, the marvellously rapid growth, prosperity, and power of the other, teach more strongly than any mere words can do the truth of my proposition, that the growth of a country is in the exact ratio with the freedom and advancement of its women, and that the subordination of women has not only dwarfed their faculties, but has made them a powerful retarding force in the progress of the world, which should, if men were wiser, be moving onwards ceaselessly, and not by fits and starts.

'It was in the nature of things, and on the whole, perhaps, not unjust, that in the earliest historic times, when brute force reigned supreme, women should have a subordinate place; physical force being of special value in a savage and barbarous community. The larger frames and tougher sinews of men were best fitted for the rough conflict of subduing the material world, and the weakest, in the hard struggle for existence, were naturally of the least value, and received the least consideration, being looked upon simply as the means through which the supply of fighting men was kept up. The world being in its infancy was not prepared for the high influences of fully developed womanhood, it could not comprehend the wide views, the deep philosophy involved in the equality of the sexes, though it must be acknowledged that this primitive state of mind is a thing not certainly unknown even in the present day. But brute force, though it may be, and often has

proved itself for the time, irresistibly powerful, can never become the *ultima ratio* of civilised society, seeing that its reign is directly subversive of anything like freedom and political justice; and, as the world developed from infancy into childhood, men began to feel slowly and hesitatingly after better things and to protest occasionally against the tyranny of force, the despotism of individuals or classes; but still woman's place was not understood, her claims were thought unworthy of attention. In the man-made mythologies of heathen-times, she was held responsible for the chief ills of life, for their first woman, Pandora, the "All-Gifted," was declared, by reason of her combined charms and indiscretion, to have brought misery upon the whole human race. Again, in the Jewish account of the fall of man, Eve is represented as the first and chief offender, not very logically—for if Adam was stronger, he might, one would have supposed, have been the better able to resist temptation, if weaker, where lay his claim to superiority? But so firmly were the Rabbis convinced that the only safety lay in woman's absolute submission and acknowledged inferiority, that in one of the Rabbinical legends Eve is represented as having had a predecessor, who daring to hold views of her own, and to possess an insatiable thirst for knowledge, was banished from Eden, and as a warning to all her sex, consigned from henceforth to the keeping of the devil. Is it any wonder that in patriarchial times with only such teaching as this to enlighten the universal ignorance, low views of womanhood should prevail.

'Plato said some striking things about the equality of the sexes it is true, and once or twice the Greek world, or rather, perhaps, I should say Athens, was agitated by questions akin to those now brought forward by the supporters of women's claims; but what the accepted position of women was in this polished nation at some periods of its history, is shown by the dictatorial manner in which that young prig Telemachus,—the type of a dutiful son, mind you,—speaks to his mother, Penelope, bidding her to "live secluded and improve her

widowed hours with female toil." Beauty was by the countrymen of Phidias and Praxiteles naturally idolised, but as an intellectual force, women's influence in the state was absolutely unrecognised; their minds were undeveloped, confined to the gynæceum, they were allowed to associate only with their husbands and nearest relatives, while such liberal views and high accomplishments as made the renown of Aspasia, being the result of freedom and unrestrained intercourse with kindred minds, were the almost exclusive possession of the hetæræ; hence, arguing from false premises, men concluded that in women, virtue was only compatable with ignorance and seclusion. With women's endowments thus ignored, perverted, and degraded, nothing was to be expected but the gradual atrophy of all that was noblest in the race.

'Amongst the Romans in their earlier days women obtained some measure of equality; they were venerated as priestesses, and historians were proud to commemorate the brave deeds of their matrons. But little by little their liberty was narrowed, until under the Canon Law, to which many of our most unjust enactments in regard to women may be traced, they lost all pretence to equal rights. They were, as Dr. Merivale points out, not associated in their husband's occupations, knew little of their affairs, and were less closely attached to their interests than even their bondsmen. They seldom shared in their recreations, which accordingly degenerated, for the most part, into debauches. Systematically deprived of instruction, the Roman matron was taught to vaunt her ignorance as a virtue, while to cultivate her intellect or taste passed almost as a crime. A love of reading Greek or Latin authors, ability to sing or dance, to make verses, to please with conversation, these, in the opinion of the historian Sallust, were no better than seductive fascinations, such as formed the charm and fixed the price of the courtesan. Less-esteemed women became less worthy of esteem, and in their deterioration the whole nation shared. Have we not here the key-note of Rome's decay and final collapse before the more vigorous races of the north?

'I made an assertion just now which it may be that some will dispute, namely, that the Canon Law is in a great measure answerable for much of the injustice from which women have suffered. I will beg your indulgence for a few minutes while I make a short digression by way of proving what part the Church has really taken in the elevation of womanhood and the advancement of the race. "Women owe everything to Christianity," we are often told, and no doubt Christ's teaching tended to place them in a position of equality; but we all know that very early in the history of the Church so-called Christians began to depart widely in this, as in everything else, from the teaching of their Founder. Strange, though not by any means unique, was the inconsistency which, while gradually raising one woman into a divinity, decreed the general inferiority of her sex, for Christian theology very soon taught that woman was created to serve man and be subordinate to him, though it would have been puzzled to find in Christ's teaching the smallest sanction for such an attitude towards a sex, some of whom, when all men reviled Him, when even His chosen friends and disciples forsook Him and fled, remained faithful in their attachment. And yet it was, as I have said before, with the ecclesiastical decrees of Christianised Rome that women's position under the law became worse instead of better. In each succeeding council of the Church, marriage was more and more dishonoured, and Augustine himself, though he admitted that the married might be saved, yet in speaking of a mother and daughter in heaven, both of them having been exemplary women, gave the latter the higher place because she had never married. St. Chrysostom, whose prayer is used day after day in the Church of England, described women as "a necessary evil," "a natural temptation," "a desirable calamity," "a domestic peril," "a deadly fascination," and "a painted ill." Women were taught to hold their own desires in abeyance to those of men, and the most perverted ideas in regard to the relations of the sexes were encouraged, in fact, as Kingsley says (*Life and Letters*), "the Christian Church was swamped by hysteria from

the third to the sixteenth century." England was Christianised in the fourth century, and yet wives were for some hundreds of years after bought and sold.* After the Reformation, the Church, though perhaps in itself less corrupt, had little more claim upon the gratitude of women. Puritanism always made most of Eve's share in the expulsion from Paradise; "it was man's complacency to woman," the people were told, "that caused his first abasement, let him not, then, glory in his shame, let him not worship the fountain of his corruption"; while Luther, with all his daring and originality, could no more understand woman's true position than he could shake off his belief in witchcraft—"No gown or garment," he said, "worse became a woman than that she would be wise." He appears again not to have considered bigamy as inconsistent with Christianity, for when consulted by the German Elector, Philip, Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, as to his right to marry a second wife, whilst his first was alive, he conferred not with the two ladies concerned to find out what *their* opinion was, but with six of the principal reformers, who agreed that as the Bible nowhere expressly condemned polygamy, Philip might do as he pleased. "I would have no compassion for a witch," he said on another occasion; "I would burn them all." A little skill in curing diseases, a taste for natural science, a love of investigating the secrets of nature, was enough to earn any one amongst the teachers of religion the fatal reputation of having dealings with the evil one; and so some of the most thoughtful of the age were the ones to suffer persecution. But harmless women were the chief victims, mostly those who through age or infirmities had lost their physical attractions, and were cruelly "done to death," because so-called "religious" teachers preached their inherent wickedness and stigmatised every peculiarity as witchcraft. Here and there a man suffered, it is true, but women, weaker, more helpless, always misunderstood, perished by thousands in every Christian country, for "the very word *femina*," we are told by a writer of the period, "means

* Herbert Spencer's *Sociology*.

one wanting in faith, since *fe* means faith, and *minus* less knowledge." Again, "Sin hath been introduced into the world by a woman's dealings with the devil, and doubtless the female mind hath still a special leaning thereto; to witchcraft, incantations, and the black arts." Nor was it only in times long past that such ideas prevailed, for when Parliament abolished the burning and hanging of witches, the assembly of Scotch Calvinists declared the Act to be a great national sin. And to come down to our own day, is it to the Church or to the teachings of science, to the ever-widening influences of education, that women owe the measure of freedom they have already obtained?

'Listen to the publicly-expressed opinions of a popular clergyman of the Church of England upon the subject of a wife's duty and position. "There is no crime," he says, "that a man can commit which justifies his wife in leaving him. It is her duty to subject herself to him always, and no crime that he can commit justifies her lack of obedience. If he be a bad and wicked man, she may gently remonstrate with him, but refuse him never." Again—"Endurance, loving submission, and intricacy of thought are their only characteristics."* Compare these words with those of an eminent man of science, Herbert Spencer, who, in speaking of woman's sphere, says: "As the usages of mankind vary so much, let us hear how it is to be shown that the sphere *we* assign her is the true one—that the limits *we* have set to female activity are just the proper limits. Let us hear why on this point of our social polity we are exactly right, whilst we are wrong on so many others." Professor Huxley, again (*Lay Sermons*), asks: "What is the first step towards a better state of things? We reply, emancipate girls. Recognise the fact that they share the senses, perceptions, feelings, reasoning powers, emotions of boys, and that the mind of the average girl is less different from that of the average boy than the mind of one boy is from that of another. . . . . Let those women who feel inclined to

* Rev. Knox Little's *Sermon to Women*, 1880.

do so descend into the arena of life; let them, if they so please, become merchants, barristers, politicians. Let them have a fair field." Now I need not say, I hope, that I have no animus against the clergy, many of whom are undoubtedly not only able and earnest, but also liberal-minded, men; but these would be the first themselves to acknowledge that throughout the world's history the spirit of clericalism has been, as a rule, antagonistic to true progress, hence its persistent efforts to hold women in thrall, to make them a mere cipher in the Church, their motherhood a curse, their subjection a favourite and oft-quoted text. Recollect the public denunciation of Mary Somerville by Dean Cockburn, of York; the opposition met with by Harriet Martineau in some of her most useful schemes; and, only this year, the narrow, dogmatic, not to say insulting, letter of Dean Burgon's in the *Daily News** against the admission of women to degrees at Oxford, and say whether it is not to thinkers rather than preachers that our race owes its advancement; and whether the latter, if they wish to retain any hold over the former, are not bound to recognise that the Church, if it is to be a living power, must modify its action to suit the new needs of the time in which we live? It is in a spirit of inquiry rather than dogmatism that a large-minded theology will approve the problems and difficulties of the age, the position of women amongst others.

'Misled by the glamour with which the exaggerated homage of chivalry surrounded them, we are apt to think that the women of the Middle Ages must have had everything that heart could desire; but any one who reads between the lines cannot fail to see that this was far from being the case; the times were still so lawless that those women who had no natural protector were forced *nolens volens* to seek refuge in the cloister. Women may, in the language of the day, have been anything; and yet, at an old French council in the thirteenth century, the question as to whether they had souls was seriously debated! In the *Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry* (pp.

* [*V. ante*, p. 42.]

27, 81, 95), compiled for his daughters' use, he speaks with approval of one wife being condemned by her husband to feed with the swine as a punishment for peevishness ; of another who was beaten for failing in instant obedience to some absurd commands, and of a third who had her legs broken for going out against her husband's will—and those were the days of chivalry ! As late as the sixteenth century, when Françoise de Saintonges tried to establish schools in France for girls, her father summoned a number of learned doctors " pour s'assurer qu'instruire des femmes n'était pas un œuvre du Démon," while she herself was persecuted, ridiculed, even hooted through the streets of Paris. The women of Turkey are scarcely kept more secluded than were Russian ladies in the eighteenth century. We read in the life of Peter the Great that when a doctor was called in to see the Tsaritsa, the windows were darkened, and he was obliged to feel her pulse through a piece of gauze ; and any one who believes with me that the more woman is regarded as an individual entity, the more she has to do with the management of society, the higher that society stands, will not, when he reads of the place assigned to her in the Greek Church and her position before the law, wonder at the social disorganization which exists in that country. Not many years ago the wife of a well-to-do peasant appealed to the Court for protection from the cruelty of her husband, who, during cold weather, had bound her nearly naked to a stake in the street, exhorting passers by to strike her, and whenever they refused, striking her himself. The Court declared the man not to blame ; the wife had been guilty of insubordination ; " we cannot afford," it said, " to teach a woman to disobey the commands of her husband." But what can you expect? I believe one of their marriage ceremonies is to present the the husband with a whip for his wife's chastisement. Well might one of their popular heroines exclaim on hearing of the emancipation of the serfs, " God has forgotten the nook where he hid the keys for women's emancipation ! " Though the abolition of slavery in the Northern States of America was due

in a great measure to the exertions of some few noble-hearted women, and of the liberal-minded men who supported them, yet so little share were they supposed to have in it, that when Lucretia Mott, and other American ladies, equally distinguished for their high character and abilities, came in the year 1840 to this country as delegates, after travelling three thousand miles to attend the Anti-Slavery Convention in London, they were actually—to the shame of our countrymen be it spoken—excluded; they might take their places with the audience, or sit behind a curtain, but though they came as the chosen representatives of certain American societies, they were not, being women, admitted to the Convention, or allowed to take part in the discussions. Two of their leading members, William Lloyd Garrison and Nathaniel P. Rogers, were so indignant that they also withdrew, while the scant justice, to say nothing of courtesy, with which they were treated, set some of these women thinking on the disabilities of their sex, the result being that the claims of women, then but feebly urged, began from that time to assume formidable proportions. So, as in the dreadful civil war of 1861, did good come out of evil. Women were not consulted on the making of that war, or, it may be, the slavery question would have been settled by arbitration; but they bore themselves bravely none the less. It is not generally known, but it was to the strategic genius of a woman, Miss Carroll, daughter of a former Governor of Maryland, in planning the campaign on the Tennessee that the cause of freedom triumphed. She had been herself a slave-owner, and was a member of a class, therefore, strongly favourable to slavery; but she freed her negroes, and devoted herself throughout the war to the interests of liberty. Her plan of the campaign, accompanied by letters and explanatory maps, was laid before the War Department in November, 1861, and was declared by Colonel Scott, the Assistant Secretary, to be the first clear solution of the war-problem in the West. Scott went himself to see it carried out in detail, and the result was that the line of Confederate fortifications was broken, the decisive point

was gained, and final success assured. A debate took place in the House of Representatives as to the author of this campaign, and it was variously ascribed to the President, the Secretary of War, and to several officers in both services. The fact, however, of its being by a civilian, and that civilian a woman, is proved by abundant testimony; but so anxious was the Government to keep this fact a secret, that Miss Carroll was entreated to make no claim to the authorship while the struggle lasted, to which, in her patriotism, she consented.* But it is not in such fields as this that woman's influence will make itself felt in the future elevation of the race. I trust the day is not far distant when, thanks to their co-operation in the government of all civilised countries, war shall have gone the way of other barbarism, and, between enlightened nations, at least, arbitration will be universally resorted to for the settlement of differences.

'An old Hindoo once had a remarkable dream in which he saw the human race typified at different stages of progress; men appeared first in a state of bondage, the reins held by an iron hand, pourtraying, of course, the age when physical force was omnipotent; but by-and-by, stage after stage, the yoke grew lighter, the outward restraint less apparent, until, finally, man was kept in check by the finest threads communicating with the brain, and held by an invisible hand. Here we have in a few words the history of human progress, the natural evolution of a higher life in the adaptation of means to ends; brain power gradually supplanting the mere vigour of limb on which men first based their assumption of superiority. Even war itself, that heritage of savagery, depends less and less upon the strength of individual combatants; scientific slaughter has taken the place of hand-to-hand struggles, and thoughtful people watching the gradual perfecting of all instruments of destruction are beginning already to foresee the day when, by means of electricity, or it may be, some still more potent force yet undiscovered, the science of wholesale murder shall have

* See *History of Women's Suffrage*, ii., 3. Fowler & Wells, New York.

reached such a pitch of perfection, that nations will have to keep the peace on pain of being annihilated; and resources which ought to be used for the advancement of knowledge, or the relief of misery, will no longer be wasted on the false glitter of so-called military glory. We might, perhaps, even now, have reached this point had woman's voice been heard more frequently in the councils of nations. "It is not good for man to be alone." If our male ancestors had acted upon this principle and, instead of attempting to rule the world unaided, had associated women more frequently with them in its government, we should have been, I venture to say, in a very different position from that in which we find ourselves to-day. M. Legouvé, the historian, declares it his honest conviction that the first French revolution failed because the Republic did not do justice to those who had borne their full share in the struggle for freedom; and, glancing over the chequered history of that country, I can see many instances in which political misfortunes might have been avoided but for the operation of the Salic law, just as in this country the established political rights of women, so far as royalty is concerned, saved us, upon the death of William IV., from being ruled by an autocratic foreigner in the person of the King of Hanover, and gave us in his place a constitutional English Queen. It is an undoubted fact that women have been exceptionally successful as rulers. One of the most important treaties of modern Europe, the Peace of Cambray in 1529, was negociated by two women, the mother of Francis I. and the aunt of Charles V. It was a woman, Isabella of Spain, who, when all Europe was laughing at the projects of Columbus, recognised their importance, and supplied him with funds for his great discovery. It was owing to the genius of Maria Theresa that the House of Hapsburg was not swept away, and that the empire of Austria still exists. Charles V. deliberately chose two princesses of his family to rule in turn over the Netherlands. Mill, who from his position in the India Office was well qualified to judge, says, "If a Hindoo principality is strongly, vigilantly, and

economically governed; if order is preserved without oppression, if cultivation is extending, and the people are prosperous, in three cases out of four, that principality is under a woman's rule." It seems worthy of note, too, that under three successive queens, the once barbarous Madagascar has become civilised. The status of the whole sex, too, has risen far above that which prevails in most Eastern countries, the consequence being that a people who, in the early part of the present century were a nation of savages, have now a system of national education (there are no less than 130,000 scholars in the provinces). In Imerina and Betsileo, polygamy has been condemned by royal decree, fair and open trial has been secured to all offenders, treaties of commerce and friendship have been concluded with England, America, and Germany; and though the men are all liable to public service, teachers, printers, every one in fact engaged in educational work is exempted, that the advancement of the young may not be checked. All vested interests have been abolished, and great reforms, including trial by jury, are firmly established. Most of these changes were instituted by the foresight and wisdom of the late queen, and it is said that the fact of a woman in the person of her niece being again chosen to occupy the throne is received with general satisfaction. It would be easy to multiply instances of the beneficial influence of women in political matters, where, as responsible beings, their faculties have been allowed full play; and yet in the face of a hundred facts such as I have quoted, we, who call ourselves an enlightened and liberal people, are found denying women even the small share of self-government involved in voting for a representative in Parliament. It is scarcely credible that so recently as the year 1836, on a proposal being made in the House of Commons to defray the cost of putting up a gallery for ladies who wished to listen to the debates, Mr. Tooke said, "It would endanger that grave and sober temper in which they ought to discharge their duties in that House;" he further went on to say that "he objected to ladies being

brought there to keep bad hours, and witness proceedings that would not always be agreeable to their feelings." Sir John Hobhouse, for his part, declared "That if they were to agree to the proposition, he was quite satisfied, it would be quite impossible to continue society on the footing upon which it now happily stood. He did not wish to see the peace and comfort of men's homes disturbed by having the discussion of the overnight renewed in the day, as would be the case if this proposition were acted upon. It was, in his mind, most indecent to see high-bred females present during the debates, and when he saw them in the House of Lords, he had often shuddered. It was a practice which had always excited his disgust." There is no one, perhaps, now, who can forbear a smile at the very genuine alarm of these worthy men; but that the most palpable absurdities decently clothed in conventional garments, have more chance of acceptance by the average mind than unfamiliar truth, experience shows us; for many of the arguments used to this day by honourable members in the House of Commons against the extension of the franchise to women-householders, are quite as illogical as those I have just quoted —will no more stand the test of cross-examination, when summoned to the bar of common-sense, and will, no doubt, excite equal amusement and ridicule in the minds of future generations, though it will be some time, I fear, before narrowness and prejudice are things unknown even in that august assembly. Those who wear tight boots cannot be expected to make any other than a halting progress; we must give them time. Everything comes to those who know how to wait and work. I am convinced that there is for women in the future a far wider and nobler influence than under present conditions we find it possible even to realise.

'A great deal of attention has been given of late years to the subject of organic evolution, more especially to the origin of man, and the manner of his development from some lower form in the scale of being; but to the thinker it is of even greater interest to watch the process of intellectual advance-

ment; to observe how in the world of thought ideas unfold one from another and differentiate according to the law of evolution; how, when humanity is ripe for certain changes, a species of fermentation seizes the minds of men, and ideas are evolved which, sooner or later, must intimately affect the welfare of the race. It was the attempt to think out some of the questions raised by women's claim to the suffrage, which convinced me that amongst all the agencies now at work in the political and social world, the so-called "woman-question" is the most momentous, and one that is destined to work a revolution in society more beneficent than any that has preceded it, representing as it does, the great movement of humanity towards its highest destiny. Every generation has its own particular work to contribute to the advancement of the world; the work of our age is to raise women to a position they have never occupied before. In *Punch*, that mirror of the times, there appeared some few years since a picture representing two little children—a boy and a girl; the former, in a commanding tone calls out,—as he stands at the top of a flight of steps—"Come here, Effie, I want you;" but Miss Effie, who evidently has not long learnt to speak so as to be understood, replies, "Thanks, I wants myself," and toddles off in an opposite direction. Now, the girl is the mother of the woman, and one of the most hopeful signs of the times, in my opinion, is the increasing sense amongst both men and women, girls and boys, that each individual of whatever sex "stands single," as Aurora Leigh says, "in responsible act and thought;" that women have some *raison d'être* other than ministering to their men-relations, or submitting without question to their behests.

'It has been remarked, that every social truth or public reform, must pass through four stages: first, "neglect"; second, "epigram"; third, "the guillotine"; and fourth, "universal acceptance." The cause of women with all its important issues, has, I think we may fairly say, outlived the first stage; it is kept too well before the public, to be neglected,

and though the "epigram," and the "guillotine," ridicule, and despotic attempts at obstruction, are not unknown, we are approaching slowly but surely the fourth stage of "universal acceptance." The average man, it is true, is constitutionally indolent, and opposed to change; like the crab, he never feels very comfortable between the casting off his old shell, and the formation of a new one; but the new one will fit him better none the less, and all his grumblings will not defer the inevitable. Education, however, must have done its work in giving to women broader outlooks, loftier views of the part they have to play in life; men must have learnt their own vital concern in the progress of women, before we can hope for an entire reform. Any existing state of things is apt to be upheld by the narrow-minded and the timorous, long after it has ceased to be desirable. "It is not natural," they tell us of any proposed innovation, meaning that they are not accustomed to it; and forgetting that this very argument upon which they think to have planted their colours so securely has, in its day, been brought forward in reply to the opponents of human sacrifice, of slavery, of despotic rule; as it has been with every abuse of the past so it is with the position assigned to women —each thinks that he has arrived in his conclusions at the just limitations of her power and freedom, as if Nature were fixed and unalterable, and that *he*, having concentrated in his person the wisdom of the ages, has fathomed her designs once and for ever. Many, very worthy people no doubt, so love and reverence the accumulated dust of ages, that they will on no account have it disturbed; peering about, unable to see beyond the ruins of their own dull spectacles they fail to realise that opposition to reform is worse than useless, for with creeds, codes, and customs ever changing, immutable truth only grows the stronger. Man is a progressive being, and those who, thinking that we have now reached a stage at which advancement must be stopped, persist in standing still, will inevitably be swept away. Daily new ideas are born and old ones die; human life is one long succession of transitions, for there is no

Procrustean process by which growing humanity can be made to conform to the cramped conditions of the past; and you can no more give permanence to institutions whose days are numbered, than indefinitely perpetuate the limitations of childhood. You can no more expect ancient laws and customs to fit into our era, than you can force the foot of a grown man into the shoes he wore in infancy. "The old order changeth, giving place to new," and it is open to each individual to range himself on the side of truth or expediency, progress or prejudice, heroes or cowards,—in other words, on the winning or the losing side; for, as I said before, if there is one thing in this world more certain than another, it is the final destruction of everything false, the ultimate triumph of everything good. There are remote chances, no doubt, of our taking a wrong turning now and then, but true reformers have never on this account hesitated to go forward; growth in one form or another is the most familiar of natural phenomena, and the true conception of human happiness is not to be found in passive endurance, but in active self-development; not, on the one hand, in being blindly satisfied with any given state of things, or on the other, so oppressed by the evils around us as to sit down in despair; but in learning to distinguish wisely between what is fixed and what is mutable in Nature's laws, so as to raise ourselves, and if it may be, others with us, above the fogs of prejudice. Let us see that we use such faculties as we possess; for it is of no use to any one that we have the best eyes in the ship if we choose to loiter on deck instead of keeping a good look-out aloft.

'A mole, when asked why it did not adopt some other mode of architecture, replied that science could go no further; and those people are just as blind who cannot read in the history of the past, that human society, woman more particularly, is destined like the dragon-fly larva, to leave her old creeping condition behind her, and come out a new-winged creature to live a freer life in a higher atmosphere than the old limitations of her cramped existence would allow. Like

the sleeping-beauty she has long lain unconscious of the possibilities of her being; but Evolution, the fairy prince, has come in his onward progress and roused her with a touch to a higher sense of responsibility and duty. No spell can again produce that enchanted slumber of the past; and those who thrust women back, put difficulties in their way, refuse them equal freedom, and preach their subordinate position, do it at their own peril. I have heard alarmists cry that those who desire the advancement of women beyond the limits *they* are pleased to prescribe, are going far towards changing the relations of the sexes, but I answer emphatically, *No.* Society is raised by every new right that women gain; if men are encouraged to advance while women are urged to stand still, or follow at a distance; if political privileges are given to an ever widening class of men, and denied altogether to women; if freedom of labour be considered the undoubted right of the one sex, while restrictions are placed upon that of the other, it is then you change the relations of the sexes by creating a wider disparity between them. Those who would restrict the freest development of women's powers are imposing a wilful injury upon society; for if women are ever to lead men onwards, politically supporting them, encouraging them to good works, they must be brought into contact with ideas of public life, of national progress. In former days it may have been that, as Bentham says, "No Government ever yielded a right unless bullied into it;" but it is to be hoped that rulers are beginning to yield to other forces, the forces of reason, of justice, of humanity, and therefore it cannot be long before it ceases to be held either just or right that the one sex should presume to prescribe limits to the functions of the other. Is it not then a wiser as well as a nobler thing to enlist as a soldier in the army of progress, to join the best in every age and country who have fought for liberty even to the death, than to spend our time in erecting barriers upon its highways? If we have any desire,

> "So to act that each to-morrow
> Finds us further than to-day."

we shall spend some of our energies in removing from half of mankind disabilities which are only worthy of a primitive and semi-barbarous age. Vacancy, stupidity, and self-interest are for ever fighting against advancement; the war between truth and error is raging without ceasing, but the survival of the fittest means the victory of the most resolute. Time and patience change the mulberry-leaf to satin, and though it may seem sometimes an almost hopeless task to fight against the wrong and injustice one sees in all directions, yet there is some encouragement in the thought that every ripple in the advancing tide means so much gained; that no noble aspiration, no earnest effort for the good of our race can ever be thrown away; that every protest against wrong, every good deed done for the sake of others brings some rays of light into the surrounding darkness, leaving us better, happier, and more hopeful than before. The great tree of progress, too, with its far-reaching branches, and roots planted deep in the soil of humanity, goes on growing year after year, blossoming and bearing fruit, and close observation of its development only makes more and more apparent the fact that all social advancement has been, and ever will be, in the direct ratio of the extension of equal freedom to the two halves of the human family; for the true laws which govern the relations of the sexes, namely those that place them in precisely the same stratum of civilisation, are, I repeat, the only ones whose observance will secure humanity's highest development.'

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'I have been looking out for you,' said a familiar voice, as Professor Wray, having got through the well-meant, but wearisome greetings and congratulations of his friends, and *their* friends and acquaintances who "wanted to be introduced to him," made his way through a side-door into a quiet street and was about to call a cab.

'This is an unexpected pleasure,' he replied, recognising and shaking hands with Sir Henry Tregarthen; 'I had no idea you were in town.'

'Nor had I yesterday,' was the reply; 'in fact I have only just come up. I have some business to look after with my solicitors in Bedford Row on Thursday, and hearing of your lecture to-night I hastened my journey by two days.'

'What time did you arrive?—I wonder I did not see you, come in.'

'Well, I reached Paddington after six, and so had not much time to do justice to the dinner my old housekeeper had prepared; but although I made all the haste possible I did not get here until late, and so sat in the very back of the hall. I am lucky in having heard the best part of your lecture though. I would not have missed it on any account. But come to my club with me, won't you? Or are you busy as usual?'

'I have not seen or heard anything of my West-country friends including yourself for so long,' replied the Professor, 'that I really do not think I can resist the temptation, I have nothing to do this evening that will not wait.'

'That is right,' replied Sir Henry, as he hailed a hansom, which in view of prospective fares was crawling past them with a perfection of slowness that one would think could only have been accomplished by a horse who had served a funeral apprenticeship, in other words, formed part of an undertaker's stock-in-trade. The animal possessed still some suppressed energy, however, as Sir Henry's practised eye had discovered, and soon they were rattling along Piccadilly and drawing up just off the great thoroughfare at the door of one of the quietest, but best managed, and most comfortable clubs in London.

'Have you seen anything of Crag's Nest and its inhabitants since we parted there in August?' asked the Professor, when, having adjourned to the smoking-room after a light supper, the waiters had placed glasses and hot water on the table, and left them to smoke their cigars undisturbed, except by the heavy breathing of an old gentleman who had fallen asleep over his newspaper in a remote corner of the room.

'They are going on just as usual, I believe,' said Sir Henry, listlessly; and the Professor struck by his manner, glancing up, noticed that his companion who formerly appeared to have an inexhaustible store of health and good spirits, looked, now the excitement of their meeting had passed away, jaded, dispirited, and at least ten years older than he had done two months ago.

'My dear fellow, I am afraid you are not well,' he said with some solicitude.

'Yes, I am all right thank you,' was the reply; and as though anxious to divert the conversation from himself, Sir Henry hastily drew a note-book from his pocket and unfolded and spread out on the table some plans and drawings of what looked like model-cottages. 'I want to ask your opinion on these,' he said. 'You are great, I know, on sanitary matters, and I am anxious to make them as perfect as possible while I am about it. I am going to put some up on my place, and as it is part of my plan to be in a position to make a present of small freeholds to deserving tenants, I shall have to talk over the question with Gittit and Keepit, as they know more than I do about the conditions of entail and of how far they will limit me.'

'But that will not interfere with the building of these cottages which are, I must say, admirably planned.'

'Oh, no, thanks be, there I am quite free, and can carry out my plan of taking some good old folks off the parish. You remember our talking of the hardship it seemed that men and women, who had struggled all their lives together to maintain themselves decently, should, when age or want drives them into the Union, be forced against their will to separate.'

'I remember Miss Acton speaking of it one day at Crag's Nest, and your saying it was a disgrace to our boasted humanity, and that Dis-union was a better name than Union for a house where husbands and wives were in their old age forced to part in this way.'

'Did I really? I must have been in good spirits to make

such a bad joke as that, on such a subject, too. Dear me, it seems twenty years ago.'

'But what,' said his companion, discreetly oblivious of the sigh that had accompanied the last words;—'but what is this larger building.'

'Merely a village reading-room. There was nothing in the place by way of counter-attraction to the ale-house, and I know she — I thought, perhaps, that put into the charge of some trustworthy person it might be made available for men and women, too; even if the women have not much time to avail themselves of it; it would often, I think, be an advantage to them in their small houses to have the men out of the way of the washing and cleaning, and yet to know that they are not spending their wages at the public-house; the place is to be opened next month, we hope.'

'Well done,' said the Professor, with some enthusiasm, 'it makes me feel quite small to think how little I have accomplished during the last two months, when you have evolved so many things and set them going.'

'I do not know that my projects, whether started or still *in nubibus*, have anything very wonderful about them,' Sir Henry said humbly; 'having gone on the principle of pleasing myself for so long, and made such a mess of it, I thought, perhaps, it would be worth trying if other people could not be made to get some satisfaction out of life; I daresay I shall fail in that, too,' and Sir Henry, flinging away his half-smoked cigar, got up, sauntered to a side-table, and taking up the *Times*, appeared, as he held it upside down, to be deeply interested in the reversal of the Magistrate's decisions in the day's police intelligence. 'By-the-way,' he said, presently coming back to the fireplace and speaking, as though the idea had only just occurred to him, 'where is — Miss Acton? Was she at the lecture?'

'Oh, ho! my young friend,' thought the Professor, 'so your interest in my discourse was not so impersonal as I supposed; there is something wrong evidently and I wish from my heart

I could act the benevolent fairy; but I suppose these things are better left to right themselves.—I am sorry to say she had not been at all well when I heard last,' he said aloud, though not looking up, and apparently still interested in the sanitary arrangements of the four-roomed cottages on the plan before him. 'She has been over-doing it I fancy; going in all weathers to a branch night-school in the East End, getting her feet wet, reading and writing until any hour of the night or morning, giving herself, in short, so her aunt told me, no rest, burning the candle at both ends, and you know what that comes to.'

'That is so unlike her; she was always so reasonable.'

'Yes, which makes it all the more provoking; I took the part of a severe parent last time I saw her, and told her plainly that if she did not care for herself, she ought to think of others; that calling selfishness by the pretty name of self-forgetfulness, did not make it a whit more creditable.'

'How *could* you be so unfeeling? If ever there was an unselfish, a large-hearted girl in this world——'

'Well I did feel rather a brute, I must say, when I saw the tears in her eyes, for she seemed quite broken down, poor child; but there is some consolation in the thought that my severity acted as a tonic, for she consented after that to leave town, as she had been ordered to do long before, and go with her aunt to Richmond for a month's change.'

'When was that?'

'About ten days ago.'

'They are there still then.'

'Yes; I hope to go and see them on Sunday if I can manage it; why don't you come too? They will be delighted see you I am sure.'

'I have had no invitation,' was the somewhat lame reply.

'I do not see well how you could have—but is that twelve o'clock striking? I really must say "good-night," for I have to be up early to-morrow. Let me see as much of

you as you can,' he added as they shook hands; 'you will find me on most mornings from ten to eleven at the Science Club. Do not have the least scruple on the score of my multitudinous occupations, for if I have any important engagements for the day I will not hesitate to tell you, and minor ones will keep.'

CHAPTER XV.

'What marriage may be in the case of two persons of cultivated faculties, identical in opinions, and purposes, between whom there exists that best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority in them, so that each can enjoy the luxury of looking up to the other, and can have alternated the pleasure of leading and being led in the path of development, I will not attempt to describe, ... but I maintain with the profoundest conviction that this, and this only, is the ideal of marriage. KINGSLEY.

'Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work.'
E. BARRETT BROWNING, *Aurora Leigh.*

'Avoir souffert, comme c'est bon. Leur malheur faisait auréole à leur bonheur.' VICTOR HUGO.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

It happened most opportunely that just at the time Professor Wray had made Madeline promise, if she would not go abroad, at any rate, to leave town for a time, that a picturesque, comfortable, and well-furnished cottage on the banks of the Thames above Richmond, which had belonged to a bachelor uncle, and was now the joint property of her young cousin and herself, had lately become vacant, and so it was very easy for her to obtain the complete rest and change prescribed by the physician, whom her aunt, in spite of many remonstrances, had persisted in calling in. Mrs. Beaumont, being really anxious about her niece, for whom she had an unbounded admiration and affection, made no difficulty about leaving her own daughter in the temporary charge of one of the Queen's College mistresses, so as to devote herself more completely to the care of Madeline; and it was greatly to the unselfish woman's disappointment that though now in the second week of their stay at Riverscot, Madeline's colour had not come back, nor her step grown more elastic, while the fitful efforts which, seeing her aunt's anxiety, she made to appear in good health and spirits, however well meant, were generally the most lamentable failures.

'I have been thinking, Madeline, that perhaps I made a mistake after all in bringing you here.' They were seated at luncheon in the little old-fashioned dining-room at Riverscot, and Mrs. Beaumont had been looking ruefully at the almost untouched contents of her niece's plate. 'The Willoughby's have certainly improved the garden; it is much prettier than in your uncle's time, and certainly more open and healthy, although you did predict that, though the river might be at the

bottom of the lawn in summer, at *this* time of the year the lawn, like another of which we have heard, was sure to be at the bottom of the river. There is nothing of that sort to complain of, but I am afraid it is dull for you to be shut up here with an old woman. I ought to have thought of it; you cannot be reading the whole day, and there is nothing to compensate for the loss of all your usual pursuits.'

'I am sure I should be very unreasonable if I wanted more than my books and your society, Auntie,' Madeline replied, affectionately, but gravely; 'besides, there is the boat,' she added more lightly; 'I enjoy the river, as you know, and in your absence where could I find a more intelligent companion than Mr. Isaacs,' she continued, stooping to stroke the white Persian cat, who sat solemnly on a footstool beside her, and who in virtue of his beauty and faithfulness to his mistress, had been named, not inappropriately, after Mr. Crawford's thorough-bred Eastern hero.

'Perhaps it would have done you good,' said Mrs. Beaumont—refusing to have her solicitude put aside or ignored—'perhaps it would have done you good to go to town yesterday, just for Professor Wray's lecture; I should have suggested it, had it not been for your cold.'

'I did not care much about it, thank you,' said Madeline; 'he is sure to send me a copy when it is published.'

'I wish your looks were as bright as your locks, dear,' her aunt said, somewhat irrelevantly it seemed, as she came round to where Madeline was sitting, and gently stroked her hair. Suddenly she stooped and kissed the soft brown braids on the girl's bent head. 'Something is troubling you, child, What is it? Am I not right, dear, in thinking it is the mind rather than the body, or, rather, the mind influencing the body?' Her hand was taken and gently pressed, but there was no reply. 'If I were your mother, Madeline—in fact, as I am in feeling—I do not think you would refuse me your confidence.' There was a tremour in the elder woman's voice which was more than Madeline's sensitive and over-charged feelings would

stand, and suddenly turning, she hid her face on her aunt's shoulder, while her whole frame was shaken by suppressed sobs. Though astonished at such an unwonted display of emotion on her niece's part, Mrs. Beaumont, not being by any means deficient in tact, if she knew when to speak, knew also when to be silent, so for some minutes she took no notice of Madeline's changed attitude, except by an occasional caressing touch. Presently she said gently, 'I have known what it was to have trouble, darling; I have known what it was to make mistakes, so I might be some help to you, perhaps, if you would let me.'

'Do you not think,' said Madeline, her cheek glowing, and her words coming in short, broken sentences—'do you not think—if—if from a love of independence, or—a foolish notion that there was something noble in the determination—to be self-sufficing in the deliberate choice of a single life, without regard to—to any one's feelings or—one's own; should you not think that one who felt so, and acted so, deserved her punishment, and that the only thing left for her to do was to bear it?'

The speaker's language was not so intelligible as usual; but, by a sort of intuition, her aunt appeared to know or guess all that had been left unsaid.

'That depends upon circumstances,' she replied. 'I believe it is no uncommon case for many of the best, and most thoughtful women, to cut themselves off from the happiness of loving and being loved in that sense, just because they are to some extent tainted by the too-common belief that she who would be a true wife and mother must devote herself absolutely to domestic duties; keep her mind within the four walls of her home, and abstract it from all larger interests; naturally a generous-souled girl or woman shrinks from the narrowing selfishness of such a creed, and finds something much more noble and attractive in a single life devoted to the interests of humanity. It is not they, but the popular views of woman as a mere domestic animal that are to blame if some of the best

and most useful women are inclined to shun wifehood and maturity. Do you not think so?'

'Yes; but ——'

'My dear child, *you* of all people do not want to be told that this view of marriage is a mistaken one; for where two human beings, loving each other above all else, bind themselves to work together, both in the home and in the world, to support one another in all that is good, to fight hand in hand against evil in themselves and in the world; bringing their hitherto separate powers and interests into one common harmony for the good of all; their strength is more than doubled, they will bring more warmth of sympathy for the joys and sorrows of others than if in their own lives they have contemptuously, or without sufficient cause, put aside the love and happiness that might have been theirs.'

'Excuse me, Aunt Helen, dear, the room is so warm, I feel stifling, I must get some air;' and with a kiss Madeline disengaged herself and hurried out.

Five minutes later she was walking with something of her old briskness through the shrubbery which skirted the lawn and led down to the water's edge, where was moored a small boat, into which Madeline presently got, and soon was pulling up the stream with a steady stroke, and a general *savoir faire*, that showed her sailor uncle's training in former days had not been thrown away.

Presently her grasp on the oars relaxed, their motion grew more and more irregular, and from the expression of her face it was evident that she was the victim of some severe mental conflict.

'This is just a picture of my life,' she soliloquised, with arms crossed upon the now idle oars, and head drooping wearily upon her breast. 'I thought myself so strong on starting, and now I am not equal to more than just drifting aimlessly along upon the stream of circumstances, with no volition of my own. There must be something radically wrong about me, I am afraid; other people have lived through mistakes and

troubles, and why should I give in? I am no wiser than our old fowls, who *would* think the night had come and go to roost because there was a partial eclipse of the sun. Why cannot I rouse myself?'

Suddenly there was a cry of distress, and turning round, Madeline saw that not far behind her a shaky little boat, such as careless shop-boys and clerks seem to prefer to all others for a day's pleasuring, had upset, and two people,—a young man and woman,—were struggling in the water. Quick as thought she flung to the former the life-belt which formed part of the fittings of her own small boat, and pulling rapidly to the spot, caught the girl's dress just as she was on the point of sinking; and, thanks to the strength born of excitement, it was with quite her old energy that she towed the poor draggled creatures in turn to the bank, then helped the man to right his craft and make it at least as seaworthy as it had been before.

They would have been in a sad predicament, no doubt, and probably one or both would have been drowned were it not for Madeline's prompt assistance, for no one else was near, and apparently neither of them could swim.

The girl's thanks, despite her lack of aspirates, were very prettily expressed, while her companion's admiration and gratitude, it was evident through all his awkwardness, were no less genuine.

'Upon my word,' he said, 'I thought it was all up with us when I saw there was nobody near but a young lady. I wonder you were not afraid to come near us, Miss, I'm sure, with such a little boat, for if we had clung to it, we should have been safe to upset you, too.'

'I had no excuse for being cowardly,' said Madeline, 'for I am almost as much at home in the water as on land; to have learnt to swim always gives one confidence.'

'Sure, and I wish I could swim, said the girl, as she shook and squeezed her dripping garments, and tried to reduce their appearance to something a little more respectable; 'I was awfully frightened I know.'

'I will give you the address of some places in London where you can learn,' said Madeline taking out her pocket-book. 'I am glad to say there are a few, though Vestries, as a rule, do not recognise the importance of a knowledge of swimming for women, at least they think it a waste of time and money. But you must have plenty of chances of learning,' she said to the man.

'Yes, Miss, and I shan't forget to-day's lesson I can assure you,' he said, touching his hat respectfully, as he stepped into the boat, and made as comfortable a seat for his companion as was possible under the circumstances. We've got to be back to Hammersmith before night,' he added in explanation.

'It is no use then to ask you as I intended,' she replied, 'to come to my house and dry yourselves, but you must at any rate accept my oars, for I see your's have disappeared. Do not hesitate, she added, 'I can get home with this,' pointing to the paddle-shaped boat-hook which lay at her feet, it is not far. I hope you will not be the worse for your wetting.'

The girl seized the speaker's gloved hand and impulsively kissed it before she stepped into the boat. 'Irish,' thought Madeline, 'no London-bred girl would have done that, whatever she might feel.'—'Good-bye; God bless you,' she said softly, touched by this silent tribute of gratitude. In another minute the boat and its occupants were growing smaller and smaller in the distance, and still Madeline stood watching, until they were out of sight, a momentary glow on her face at the thought that even in her present state of self-discontent, she had been able to be of little use to some one. Presently she seated herself in the stern of her small canoe-like craft, and succeeded, after a time, not without some difficulty, but without any serious *contretemps*, in steering into the little creek just below the house. Having made the boat fast, she sat down panting upon a felled tree just above the water's edge, her head seemed to spin round, the reaction from over-exertion and excitement had set in, and she was shaking in every limb. But Madeline had not learnt to give in to any symptoms of weakness or

delicacy. 'This is disgraceful,' she said, with her hand pressing agianst her left side ; ' I used to think nothing of an hour's hard exercise, and now just look at me.'

A little robin came, and alighting beside her, turned his head this way and then that, as though he would say, 'Well, I am doing my best to look at you, but you are about as untrustworthy as most human beings.' Finding some biscuit crumbs in her pocket, Madeline scattered them, trying to attract him, but after fluttering his wings in momentary indecision, he presently flew away.

When mind and body are both below par, a very little thing is sufficient to affect the spirits. A sudden sense of loneliness came over Madeline. On the lawn of a large house in the distance, some people were playing lawn-tennis, and now and then she could hear the faint echo of their voices, or catch Kaleidoscopic changes of colour and arrangement, as they flitted to and fro, and they seemed to her in her present mood like beings from a different sphere. Never had the reach of the river seen from this point looked more beautiful than now, as it wound between its meadow-like or wooded banks, the autumn tints on the foliage lighted up, and the water glistening in the slanting rays of the sun. A year ago Madeline would not have rested until with pencil or brush she had transferred some idea of the scene to paper ; but now, the brightness of the distant view, the chilliness and shade of the spot on which she sat, only suggested depressing metaphors.

' " Do the thing that's nearest,
Though it's dull at whiles,
Helping when you meet them
Lame dogs over stiles."

Isn't it Charles Kingsley,' she said, ' who gives this as a rule for contentment ? I ought to feel unspeakably happy at having had the privilege of helping two lame dogs over a stile this afternoon. Am I so selfish that I cannot find my happiness in that of others? And yet what could I do more? I tried to throw myself into my work and was told to drop it, it was doing

me harm; now I am trying idleness and I cannot see that this is any improvement. I shall be turning into a *malade imaginaire* if I don't take care, and do nothing but feel my mental pulse. Aunt Helen is so good, I wish I could help giving her so much anxiety. Take her advice—no; in anything else perhaps I might, but if there is no other way. How could I go and seek—' again she paused; but there was a pathetic look in her speaking eyes which said more than any words.

The air was growing chilly, but still Madeline sat on, truth to say, somewhat dreading under the circumstances a *tête-a-tête* with her aunt. There was a footstep on the turf-grown path leading to the little cove, but pre-occupied by her own thoughts she did not hear it; suddenly, as a twig snapped close behind her, she started, but before she could turn a shawl was dexterously thrown over her shoulders. In a moment Madeline sprang to her feet, the blood rushing to her face and tingling to her very finger-tips, as she recognised in the intruder one who had claimed almost exclusive possession of her thoughts for some time past

'Forgive me if I have disturbed you,' said Sir Henry, not without some constraint, as, at seeing her, the remembrance of how they had parted flashed upon his mind; 'but I called at the house and Mrs. Beaumont was anxious about you; so I undertook to find you, if possible, and bring you this shawl.'

'Thank you,' she replied, holding out her hand, but otherwise greeting him with more formality than when they had first met in the previous summer.'

'I had some business in town,' he went on hurriedly; feeling that anything was better than this silence which seemed to have fallen between them; 'and finding that—I thought my sister would like to know that you were not well. I mean that I was——'

As he grew more confused so Madeline's scattered faculties fell into order. 'I have not heard from Nellie for a long time,' she replied; 'but it is my fault, I have been in her debt so many weeks. I will write, however, before another day has

passed, to thank her for her solicitude, which is more than I deserve.'

'But—well, the fact is, she did not exactly tell me to call, only I had not heard anything of you for so long, and when I found you were ill——'

'Not ill.'

'Out of sorts, then, it was enough; I could not keep away. Good Heavens! How I have thought about you night and day ever since we parted. If you had ever known what it was to love you would understand—and I was fool enough once to dream—but I am not going to worry you,' he added hastily. 'You are not one of the changing type I know, and I should only kill such little regard as you may still have for me. And yet I have thought sometimes, if I had loved you a little less, and so had been more calculating, more politic, had weighed my words and measured every action, I might have pleaded my cause better, and not brought upon myself a decree of banishment which I know you too well to hope can ever be reversed.'

'It was a mistake,' she said; 'it was all a mistake.'

'No one can know that better than I,' he replied sadly.

'But you do not understand; I mean——' partly to hide her trembling, partly because she could not find words to express what she had now made up her mind to say, Madeline taking advantage of the excuse offered by a premonitory drop or two which were evidently the precursors of a heavy shower, made some hasty allusion to the change of weather, and led the way up the shrubbery path towards the house, her companion following her slowly. 'You will stay and dine with us to-night,' she said, waiting for him to overtake her; 'we are quite alone.'

'I cannot, thank you,' he replied; 'but I will walk back with you. The fact is,' he added in an agitated voice, after a moment's pause, 'I cannot trust myself. By-and-by, after some years perhaps, I may manage to meet you as a friend; but now it is impossible.'

'Oh, how hard you make it for me!' she exclaimed impulsively; 'but I must say it.' She paused a moment, her cheek

glowing, and her breath coming fast with the effort. 'There sh be no more misunderstandings.' They had just reached the e of the shrubbery-walk and she turned and faced him; there w a look in the expressive eyes raised for one brief moment to l that he had never seen in them before. 'I told you it was a mistake,' she said; 'but the mistake was mine not yours – want you to take back the "regard," or "pity," or "friendship or whatever it was I offered you, and to accept—my love instead Both voice and head had been gradually lowered as she spok until the last words were only just audible, and before he ha time to reply, or even to recover from his surprise, she ha vanished round the corner and into the house.

For some minutes Sir Henry stood bewildered by th sudden revulsion of feeling, and hardly daring to move fo fear it should prove one of those idle dreams which had so often mocked him of late. One thing, however, was certain, he must follow her and learn the truth.

It was getting dusk; and as he passed the drawing-room window he could not resist glancing within, attracted first by the glow of the firelight, and secondly by the interest which a man cannot help feeling in the home, even the temporary home of the woman he loves. A low chair was drawn up to the hearth, two small fur-lined slippers lay warming side by side, while keeping guard over them was 'Mr. Isaacs' looking so much a part and parcel of the white fluffy rug upon which he had seated himself, that he might by a small stretch of the imagination be supposed to share the peculiarities of the stick and leaf insects or other animals known to zoologists, which through a long course of natural selection and survival of the fittest, have reached such a perfection of protective mimicry as to be with difficulty distinguished from their surroundings. A small brass kettle was singing beside the fire, while half in the shade stood a little table on which silver and old china, and a bright cosy, gave a hint of afternoon tea, an institution at which, whatever his mistress might do, Mr. Isaacs never failed to preside, with one eye steadily fixed upon the cream-jug, and with a low purr of

that gratitude which was evidently, in his case 'a sense of favours to come.' Of human occupants, however, at this moment, so far as Sir Henry could see, there were none, but Mrs. Beaumont met him in the porch.

'Thank you for finding the truant,' she said in a motherly tone, and with a smile that meant more than her words. 'I have just sent her into the drawing-room to warm herself, if you will follow her she will give you some tea. I am sure you must must both want it, the evening is so damp and chilly.'

The door was half open and Madeline, who had thrown off her hat and jacket, was drawing the heavy tapestry curtains across the large window as he entered.

'Madeline, tell me that you meant it,' he said in a low tone full of suppressed feeling,—'it is almost too good to hope for, but is it true that you really love me?'

Her only reply was to turn, and, with a smile whose equal for brightness he had never seen, hold out both hands with an action of complete self-surrender.

'My queen!' he said, as he clasped them tenderly and stooped to kiss first one and then the other. 'God helping me, you shall never regret this moment.'

'I am not afraid,' she answered, 'but I want to ask you to forgive me for the pain I have caused you. When first you spoke I was so unprepared.—I did not know.—I did not understand myself, I only wish that I——'

'Do not wish to be anything but what you are, dearest,' he replied, as on the plea of moving to the fire he drew her nearer to his side. 'I would not have had you less independent on any account. I would not have had you won more easily, if that is what you are thinking of. I pity the man whose highest ideal of a wife is of one who shall be a feeble reflection of him, a purely receptive being, her mind a mere piece of white paper void of all character except such as he may be pleased to trace upon it. I would not go back to the old days, darling, before you taught me more by what you were than by anything you said, a truer conception of womanhood.

Oh, Madeline, if I ever do anything in this world, it will be, thanks to you.'

'I have had some things to unlearn, too,' she replied, 'in my revolt against the old ideas of women's necessary helplessness and dependence, I was inclined in practice, if not in theory, to go to the other extreme; but, dearest,——' and Madeline's low voice thrilled with deep feeling as she held his disengaged hand fast between her own. '*You* have taught me that noble as a self-sufficing life may be, there are, perhaps, still greater possibilities of usefulness for those to whom mutual love does not mean mutual absorption.'

'I trust I may never, even inadvertently, tempt you to change your opinion, darling. Look; do you see this?' taking from his little finger, what appeared like a plain but substantial ring with no device but two hands—a man's and a woman's—clasped together. 'Will you wear it until I can get you one that the world will think more worthy of you, although to me it would be less appropriate? This ring was given by my father to my dear mother, by my grandfather to my grandmother, and I am afraid to say how many more generations used it as a pledge of faith, for it is said to date back to the sixteenth century; but you must know its mysteries,' he continued, taking the ring once more gently from her finger, and, touching a spring, whereupon the hands unclasped, and the one thick ring became three slender circles all hinged together, a hand upon each of the outer ones and on the middle one, just under where the hands had clasped, two hearts.

'There is something engraved upon it,' said Madeline, examining the ring with interest by the firelight.

'*Vis unita fortior*,' he replied, as he showed her the way in which the hands could be made to clasp again over the two joined hearts with the motto beneath them, making again one solid ring. 'I think I could scarcely give you a more appropriate pledge than this,' he continued, earnestly, 'that I have adopted to the fullest extent your creed that only in equality,

in common interests, whether great or small, can there in marriage be the truest love and fellowship. I have thought much on this subject since we parted, and I see more and more plainly that while "Unity is strength," there can be no perfect union between individuals, or between the two halves of the human race, until we recognise the necessity not only for "Two heads in council, two beside the hearth," but also for, "Two in the tangled business of the world."'

THE END.

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